



University of Bradford eThesis

This thesis is hosted in [Bradford Scholars](#) – The University of Bradford Open Access repository. Visit the repository for full metadata or to contact the repository team



© University of Bradford. This work is licenced for reuse under a [Creative Commons Licence](#).

**APOCALYPTIC MOVEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY
POLITICS: CHRISTIAN ZIONISM AND JEWISH RELIGIOUS
ZIONISM**

C ALDROVANDI

PhD

UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD

YEAR 2011

**APOCALYPTIC MOVEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY
POLITICS: CHRISTIAN ZIONISM AND JEWISH RELIGIOUS
ZIONISM**

Carlo ALDROVANDI

**submitted for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy**

Department of Peace Studies

University of Bradford

2011

Title:

Apocalyptic Movements in Contemporary Politics: Christian Zionism and Jewish Religious Zionism

Keywords:

Apocalypticism; Chaos/Order; Covenant; Death; Eschatology; Messianism; Millenarianism; Redemption; Violence

Abstract:

This dissertation focuses on the 'theo-political' core of US Christian Zionism and Jewish Religious Zionism. The political militancy characterizing two Millenarian/Messianic movements such as Christian Zionism and Jewish Religious Zionism constitutes a still under-researched and under-theorized aspect that, at present, is paramount to address for its immediate and long terms implications in the highly sensitive and volatile Israeli-Palestinian issue, in the US and Israeli domestic domain, and in the wider international community. Although processes of the 'sacralisation of politics' and 'politicisation of religions' have already manifested themselves in countless forms over past centuries, Christian Zionism and Jewish Religious Zionism are unprecedented phenomena given their unique hybridized nature, political prominence and outreach, mobilizing appeal amongst believers, organizational-communicational skills and degree of institutionalization.

Table of Contents

Introduction	Political Religions and Theo-politics	1
	Research hypotheses, p. 9 - The dissertation in a nutshell, p. 11 - Some remarks on epistemological and methodological concerns, p. 16	
I.	The Sacred Canopy	20
	The unfinished animal, p. 21 - A relief from the Maelstrom, p. 23 - The world as an idea, p. 25 - Cultural patterns, p. 27 - Symbolically re-instinctivized, p. 29 - Nomos, p. 30 - As above, so below, p. 32 - The sacred, p. 34 - The centre of the world, p. 35 - Really real, p. 37 - The need to believe, p. 38	
II.	Meaning at the End	43
	A sharp-toothed ogre, p. 45 - The <i>Eschaton</i> , p. 47 - The abolition of history, p. 48 - The everlasting Covenant, p. 50 - 'Now already', but 'not yet', p. 54 - Defining the Apocalypse, p. 57 - The Zoroastrian lore, p. 62 - Birth Pangs, p. 65 - Origins is the goal, p. 68 - Where heaven meets earth, p. 71 - Re-winning mankind, p. 73	
III.	The Millennium	83
	Disaster, p. 85 - Deprivation, p. 88 - Between deficiency and fulfilment, p. 90 - Messianism, p. 93	
IV.	Millenarianism and Absolute Politics	102
	'Us' versus 'them', p. 104 - Monism, p. 106 - Charisma, p. 108 - Palingenesis, p. 112 - Pre- and postmillennialism, p. 114 - Apocalyptic and Naturalistic Messianism, p. 118 - An <i>Eschaton</i> beyond reach, p. 121 - A creative tension, p. 123 - Forcing the End, p. 125 - The transitional phase, p. 128	
V.	Jewish Religious Zionism	138
	An anti-Messianic undertaking, p. 144 - The Haredi world, p. 148 - The Religious Zionist synthesis, p. 152 - The Kookist triangle, p. 154 - The Lurianic lore, p. 156 - Saving God, p. 158 - A perfect symmetry, p. 159 - Saints despite themselves, p. 161 - Eretz Ysrael, p. 164 - The Messianic Age, p. 172 - A 'Torahcratic' republic, p. 173 - Between June 1967 and October 1973, p. 178 - Gush Emunim as a revitalization movement, p. 180 - A Jewish 'McJihad', p. 183 - Normalization, p. 188 - Yamit, p. 190 - The Apocalyptic turn, p. 192	

VI.	US Christian Zionism	217
	Dispensationalism, p. 222 - The Cult of the Text, p. 224 - Dual Covenant, p. 229 - Restorationism, p. 230 - Purging Eretz Ysrael, p. 232 - People who must dwell alone, p. 241 - Jacob's troubles, p. 242 - Vertical escapism, p. 243 - Armageddon complex, p. 246 - Jerusalem as a thermometer, p. 247 - Utopian peace, p. 249 - Giving up on the world, p. 250 - Participatory shift, p. 253 - The politics of the Apocalypse, p. 255 - Pastor Hagee's two hats, p. 261 - Adversus Ioudaeos, p. 266 - An ironic over-assurance, p. 276 - Cultural Apocalypse, p. 278 - Dispensationalism as a new plausibility structure, p. 284 - Axis of evil, p. 289	
	Conclusion and Research Implications	327
Appendix	The Apocalyptic and Violence	339
	The Paranoid Gestalt, p. 340 - Creative destruction, p. 334 - Cycles of Violence, p. 348 - Purgatory complex, p. 349 - Conclusive remarks on the relation between the Apocalyptic and violence, p. 351	
	Bibliography	360

Acknowledgments

I would first like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Jim Whitman, for seeing this thesis through the entire process. I also must make special mention of the Consortium for Peace Studies at Calgary University, whose generous support allowed me to achieve substantial progresses in key areas of my PhD project. Finally, I would like to thank my wife Sophie for her thoughts and love.

Introduction: Political Religions and Theo-politics

The intellectual background of this present dissertation is three years of research into the cultural origins of Fascist ideology, which I conducted in the conclusive phase of my studies at the Faculty of Political Science at Bologna University. This subject area is perhaps the object of one the longest ongoing scholarly debates in the field of modern history and political studies. I understood the complex phenomenon of Fascism as a form 'political religion', relying on the groundbreaking analytical concepts and heuristic devices put forward by the Italian historian Emilio Gentile.

Particularly compelling was Gentile's contention that Fascist ideology was not exclusively animated by pure 'negativity', the desire to put an end to the existing liberal institutions and their democratic values. Fascism was rather underpinned by a creative ambition: the idea that in order to resolve Italy's post-war crisis and longstanding deficiencies as a modern nation, it was necessary to undertake an all-encompassing anthropological revolution, whose ultimate goal was the regeneration of the liberal institutions and society with the creation of a new Fascist man and civilization. According to Gentile, the prospect of national re-birth under the Fascist aegis was key to Mussolini's ideology and its success. It was able to exert its fascination not only on the 'true believers', but also on the more moderate minds within the Fascist party. It equally beguiled rank and file and theoreticians. Further, it captivated well-respected Italian intellectuals and public figures who had prominent roles in the Liberal society and state institutions. It has been convincingly argued that such a transformative vision also established a mass resonance, although it remains impossible to ascertain duration, exact extent and fluctuations of this spontaneous popular adhesion to the Fascist regime over its twenty-year life span.¹

Needless to say, Gentile's innovative hypothesis cut against the grain of mainstream historiography, whose interpretative approaches traditionally deprived Fascist ideology of any positive formulation. Mussolini's creed was understood mainly as 'a mix of demagogic improvisation, mystifying aspirations and initiatives, in any case irrelevant to its knowledge and understanding'.² On this ground, the Fascist movement could only be an epiphenomenon with no historical subjectivity on its own: be it a mob of pseudo-intellectual opportunists, ignorant adventures, or brutal criminality entirely subservient to large capitalistic interests; 'il braccio armato' [the

enforcer] of the nationalist-bourgeois reaction against the mounting tide of Bolshevism; or, following Benedetto Croce's comment, a 'mere parenthesis': a contingent moral disease due to the irruption of irrational-atavistic forces, which temporarily delayed the ascending trajectory of human civilisation.³ Gentile was neither the first nor the only scholar to challenge this consensus of opinion. From extensive reading of authors like George Mosse, Uriel Tal, Ze'ev Sternhell, Stanley Payne, Roger Griffin and many others⁴, I soon appreciated how Fascism did have a coherent ideological apparatus, which played a crucial part in Mussolini's seizure and control of power. This ideology was syncretic in character, as it drew from a vast and most heterogeneous cultural repertoire that, ironically, included even democratic ideals belonging to the tradition of the Italian Risorgimento.⁵

As far as I was concerned, the most compelling contribution of this scholarship was nevertheless to highlight and systematically address the formidable and often underestimated role that religious ideals, myths and archetypes have in the formulation of modern politics - or, as Gentile puts it, in the processes of 'sacralization of politics'. It was also the first time that I fully realized how political action might merge with religion to the extent of blurring their respective boundaries. In keeping with this reading, Fascism provides a paradigmatic example of a political religion, because it studiously appropriated a set of religious beliefs, myths, dogmas, ritual and liturgies, but only to bestow an aura of sacredness on its own legitimacy, symbolic universe and intra-historical ambitions. Otherwise put, as a secular entity, Fascism 'sacralised' itself by incorporating constitutive elements of established religions - namely Judaism and Christianity, whilst reducing them to a subordinate and auxiliary role. As a concrete experience of national revitalisation, Mussolini's movement profoundly altered the modes of collective action, but also broadened the range of cultural and historical possibilities. In particular, it set an important precedent for other totalitarian experiments of sacralisation of politics that crowded the history of the past century: with Fascism, Soviet Communism, National Socialism and Maoism are perhaps the most notorious attempts to build secular deities in their own right. The rise to power of these new 'totalitarian churches' also entailed substituting an omnipotent divine being with an infallible but nonetheless human charismatic leader, to whom the masses owed awe and obedience. As a result of this, all the traditional faiths aiming for the individual's allegiance became dangerous competitors, which needed to be swallowed by the political sphere and be thereby obliterated.⁶

Fascism pursued its palingenetic programme through what philosopher Ernst Cassirer famously called 'the explicit and solemn enthronement of myth'.⁷ In opposition to the Positivist doctrines and classic liberal thought which defined the cultural tone of the nineteenth century, the Fascist creed overtly appealed to the irrational as a primary source for political legitimacy and mobilization: it 'brought myth-based thought to power by officially declaring that it was the only form of collective political culture suited to the masses, who, according to Mussolini, were by their very nature incapable of any form of self-government'.⁸ Furthermore, Fascism proved that, under particular socio-historical circumstances, sacralization of politics can indeed lead towards exclusionary and antidemocratic approaches, whose chief goal is to subordinate and homogenize human collectivity to a single and integralist will to power, and at the same time promote discriminatory and persecutory measures against those who were viewed as being outside the community of the elected - either because they refused to convert or were regarded as enemies or racially inferior.⁹

Since I came to the UK for my Master Degree at the Department of Peace Studies at Bradford University, I have widened my intellectual compass and research remit to include the political dimensions of religion. I almost immediately recognized in the mundane engagement of various religious Fundamentalisms a significant counterpoint to the processes of 'sacralization of politics' I studied in Italy. If, until the demise of communism in 1989, the twentieth century could be recognized as 'the age par excellence of political faiths, of secular salvations offered on a national or universal scale',¹⁰ the rise of political Islam and that historical watershed represented by the events of 9/11 re-ordered almost all research priorities towards the other side of the coin: the extreme politicisation of traditional religions. The 12 months following 9/11 saw the publication of 800 texts (in English alone),¹¹ which attempted to understand what Al Qaeda's spectacular attacks against the loathed symbols of US Westernized culture really meant and which place they should occupy in the complex abstractions and taxonomies of political scientists. Some commentators identified in the extremist posture and actions of Al Qaeda and other affiliated Islamist movements the natural offspring of Islam, accordingly epitomized as the most Fundamentalist of the three monotheistic faiths. Other stressed instead how Al Qaeda's call for a worldwide Jihad had nothing to do with Islamic theology and culture, representing rather a mere religious 'sugar-coating' for non-religious purposes.¹²

A different strand of scholarship, perhaps more oriented towards the history of ideas and cultural studies, pointed to the idea that September 11 brought to the fore nothing but the symptoms of an already ongoing process. Long before that unforgettable landmark, Modernity and the thrust towards globalization had the effect of partially fragmenting or deconstructing some of traditional centres of sacred meaning and hierocratic power in all world religions. This in turn encouraged unprecedented forms of ethno-religious tribalism, sometimes acquiring Apocalyptic overtones. Contact with strangers and strangeness, cultural imperialism or, more generally, abrupt changes in existing social orders seemed to plunge believers into what French sociologist Émile Durkheim defined as a state of 'anomie'. In keeping with this view, globalized Modernity would relentlessly engender those circumstances that are conducive to revolutionary attempts to revive, sometimes through violence, a traditionalist framework of religious meaning shaped upon the myth of the Golden Age. What I found often forgotten or underestimated about these revivalist movements was their adaptability and inventiveness. Although many of them reached back in history for ancient images and concepts that give them credibility and sense, these were not simply efforts to resuscitate old ideas from the past. They rather offered contemporary solutions devised to meet present-day spiritual, socio-cultural and political needs.

In particular, whilst condemning its corruption and relativism of values, such revivalist phenomena appropriated Modernity in a highly idiosyncratic but nonetheless creative fashion. They tended to incorporate selected strands of the alien culture they claimed to reject and syncretise them with the healthy elements of their own tradition. The end result of such a process was an unprecedented cultural compound resulting from heterogeneous and apparently incompatible constituents. In the eyes of believers, this new reality was able to cut a 'revolutionary path' through anomie towards the restoration of a sacred order. Consistent with such views, these revivalist religious phenomena should not be seen as atavistic reactions against 'Westoxication',¹³ but rather as 'Modernist anti-modernization' paradoxes. In this central aspect I immediately recognized a perhaps spurious yet most indicative kinship with Fascist ideology. As Gentile and many other historians brilliantly detailed in their work, Fascism represented first and foremost a countercultural response to the malaise and challenges put in place by Modernity, which flourished by drinking directly from its fruitful springs. Rather than attempting to return to the past or halt the modernization processes, those who voluntarily embraced

the Fascist solution aimed at solving the sense-making crisis engulfing them 'by jumping into a construction of a new future, and into the creation of a new civilization'.¹⁴ They waged their crusade against modern decadence by proactively and creatively engaging Modernity and its culture, believing they possessed a formula to give humanity 'the power to change the world that [was] changing them, to make their way through the Maelstrom and make it their own'.¹⁵

Having studied the processes of sacralisation of politics in depth enabled me to pose and try to answer crucial questions, to uncover interconnections and similarities, but at the same time to highlight differences. For our purposes here it is noteworthy that, insofar as the ideal typical category of political religion is concerned, the ultimate goal of collective life and the highest source of revelation/truth are not located in the transcendental realm. Following the conceptualisation firstly introduced by Eric Voegelin, all the major revolutionary and totalitarian movements of the last century which drew upon religious ideals and imageries did so by completely 'immanentizing' the *Eschaton* and subordinating God to secular ends such as the nation, the race, the blood, the class, the party, etc.¹⁶ More often than not, politicized forms of religion would instead act intra-historically, but only to affirm their own sacred ideals, codes, and goals in the secular society and state. In this sense, a paradigmatic example is offered by those Islamist movements fighting politically for the establishment of a theocratic state organized around the Shari'a law. Some may argue that, even in this case, the *Eschaton* is still partly subject to a process of immanentization, as these politicized forms of religion have a mundane commitment to fulfil which obliges them to use history as a channel of realization. This consideration notwithstanding, I would submit that their ultimate goal remains doubtlessly to bring down a piece of true transcendence (what Mircea Eliade defined 'the perfection of the world above'¹⁷) and implement it on earth.

Despite this glaring difference, it was almost impossible not to notice a convergence between the two modalities of merging politics and religion: the myth of palingenesis. As historian of ideas Roger Griffin details in his seminal research on the subject, the religious archetype that Fascism and other political religions most obsessively deployed in the construction their consensus was that of utter re-birth or palingenesis. In its countless permutations, this archetype would allow humankind to cleanse itself from a period of real or perceived anomie and moral decadence, with a new beginning in a restored and

perfected world-order.¹⁸ According to many of the abovementioned historians, Mussolini's nationalist revolution derived this idea directly from the Apocalyptic import of the Great War: the first 'total' and 'global' conflict which, since its outbreak in August 1914, was hailed by many intellectuals and politicians as a catastrophic watershed between two qualitatively different aeons, and the beginning of a 'metanoia' that was meant to regenerate the whole of Italian society.¹⁹ Griffin claims that the idea of palingenesis can express itself in both religious and secular forms without being bound to any particular source or tradition.²⁰ Despite such a claim, I found this archetype of human mythopoeia featuring prominently in ancient forms of Apocalypticism within the Abrahamic spectrum, and at the same time having strong political application at present, not only in Jihadist Islam, but also in US Christian Millenarianism and Israeli Jewish Messianism. Perhaps in a way not entirely contrary to Griffin's views, it seemed that the myth of palingenesis was able to draw a sort of historical trajectory, from its origin within the bosom of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, through Western philosophy into modern political religions and totalitarianisms. With the return of this myth to its religious moorings, the trajectory seemed to have completed a full circle. The fascinating discovery that the ideal of a new beginning in a flawless order of existence was still 'alive and kicking' and significantly impacting on politics and societal orders soon became the major stimulus to undertake a research at doctoral level.

This dissertation focuses on the theo-political nature and regenerative ambitions of Israeli Religious Zionism and US Evangelical Dispensationalism. The intricate relationship between religion and politics has been a globally topical theme for at least three decades. However, if political religions have received in-depth and systematic scholarly treatment, in my opinion there are still few compelling analytical statements on organized forms of politicized religion. The selection of these two case studies is motivated by the evidence that, as a result of the 9/11 aftershock, political Islam has received almost exceeding academic attention, whilst this subject remains under-researched and under-theorized for what concerns politicized religious identities and movements within Judaism and Christianity. The terminological choice 'theo-political' is meant to acknowledge that these socio-cultural phenomena use politics as a means to foster transcendental aspirations and goals centred on their respective salvational agenda. Otherwise put, the sacred is not simply a

source of legitimacy and mobilization for non-religious purposes, but the main and absolute issue at stake.

A contention that will be often raised in the course of this dissertation is that, although in everyday tactics and practices they might present a more moderate and pragmatic side, the ideal that propels both phenomena - one rarely exposed to public scrutiny - is inherently palingenetic and it is so in the originally religious meaning of that ideal. After extensive reading on the existing literature, I found that many studies of contemporary Christian and Jewish Religious tend to underestimate, or sometimes even ignore, that their source of consensus and style of political participation is underpinned by the urge to purge, regenerate and redeem the respective societies according to cosmically ordained imperatives. What really struck my attention was the fact that, aside their seemingly irreconcilable doctrinal differences, US Christian Zionism and Israeli Religious Zionism seem to converge on one critical point: their worldly engagement is aimed at solving the deficiencies and flaws hindering the current secular order through the establishment of a theocratic rule in which religious or ethnic differences are not contemplated. In this circumstance, secular institutions, society and culture need to be absorbed by the religious sphere and thereby be obliterated. In a way strikingly similar to the totalitarian projects and sacralised ideologies I previously investigated, these Millenarian and Messianic phenomena are animated by compelling monistic goals, and also demonize their out-group counterparts, in a fashion which can sometimes elicit violence against them.

The difficulty I confronted since the beginning of my research is that although US Christian Zionism and Jewish Religious Zionism have attracted dedicated and considerable scholarly attention, much of it remained narrowly underpinned by the approaches of the social and political sciences. At best, these approaches categorized such religiously inspired forms of militancy as the outcome of the desperation of economically or socially disenfranchised fringes. At worst, they stigmatized these phenomena as inherently paranoid or pathologically destructive forms of collective deviance. There was indeed a strong determinative connection between a secular scholarship lacking a sound 'religious literacy', namely, in Apocalyptic, Millenarian and Messianic thought, and its interpretative shortcomings. On the other hand, the few times in which the same subject was engaged theologically, I sometimes noted a misconception or underestimation of its political implications. Religious approaches also tended to downplay or even turn a blind eye to the most contentious aspect

concerning this kind of theo-political mobilization - most notably, the inclinations towards exclusionary thinking and the justification of redemptive violence as means to transcendental fulfilment.

As a researcher trained in the field of political sciences, but extremely fascinated by history of ideas, theology and religious studies, I decided that my first and incremental contribution to the debate on politicized religions was that of trying to rectify these lacunae by applying what historian George Mosse called 'methodological empathy'.²¹ The underlying purpose here is therefore to address and compare two modern theo-political manifestations of the enduring myth of existential palingenesis not just empirically, but also and foremost 'phenomenologically': that is, with a serious, in-depth and systematic treatment of the religious beliefs, texts, worldviews and meaning systems that triggered and continue to motivate the believers' involvement in world politics.

The main argument of this study is that religions have always interacted with their surrounding societies in a highly dynamic and complex fashion that cannot be easily grasped in its full scope, let alone by relying solely on the epistemological and analytical stand informing secular-progressive scholarship. Among the latter, there is still a rather consolidated opinion that the methods of rational choice and critical thinking are conducive to the creation of a stable and peaceful civil society, whereas intrinsically inferior emotional constructs like religion are bound to fan unrest, intolerance and violence. As Marc Gopin succinctly puts it, the post-Enlightenment approach celebrating the centrality of rationality as a primary marker and maker of human identity, needs, aspirations and action finds little resonance in a believer's mind. This appears to be the case especially in the moments of crisis, when what is all too often negatively dismissed as 'sacred passion' defines and connects the inner and public life of those who embrace it.²²

I would like to make clear that this study does not argue in favour of a 'pathologization' of faith-based identities, discourses and practices, uncritically stigmatizing religion as the hotbed of sectarianism, intolerance and violence. Its main purpose is, rather, to raise awareness about the dangers inherent in a misconception or underestimation of its relevance and mobilizing force. As Gopin and many others pointed out, the human complex relation to the sacred is marked by an underlying ambivalence:

Through our long human history, religion has been a major contributor to war, bloodshed, hatred, and intolerance. Yet religion has also developed laws and ideas that have provided civilization with cultural commitments to critical peace-

related values, including empathy, an openness to and even love for strangers, the suppression of unbridled ego and acquisitiveness, human rights, unilateral gestures of forgiveness and humility, interpersonal repentance and the acceptance of responsibility for past errors as a means of reconciliation, and the drive for social justice.²³

In keeping with this statement, I would submit that, in order for the destructive side to be overcome by the creative one, it is essential 'to be schooled in how religious myths and metaphysical assumptions express in the mind of believers their deepest feelings'.²⁴ This kind of intellectual engagement is no doubt difficult, time consuming and sometimes even off-putting, but it represents a key step towards the understanding and prevention of the most hateful and anti-social expressions of religion. With Gopin, I would also contend that addressing religiously driven intolerance and violence from the authentically theological perspectives that motivated them in the first place can be used 'in the process of moving people towards conflict reduction and even reconciliation'.²⁵

Research hypotheses

Given the multiple and diverse pressures and beliefs that converge on that sensitive geo-political area, extensive and valuable scholarly work has already been conducted on the subject of religious Fundamentalisms with vested soteriological interests in the Holy Land. To my knowledge, however, a methodological framework interfacing theology with political-social sciences has never been comprehensively applied to contemporary forms of Jewish Messianism and Christian Millenarianism, let alone in comparative terms. Moreover, so as to offer a distinct and significant contribution to knowledge I thought necessary to test the following overall research hypotheses, which I try to present here in the most synthetic form:

- As politicized religious movements, Israeli Religious Zionism and US Evangelical Zionism have a clear line of historical antecedents. Nevertheless, once their current earthly involvement is taken into account, these phenomena represent unprecedented and unique hybrids between religion and politics. Both movements deserve academic attention in view of the exceptional prominence and outreach they have recently acquired in the respective domestic domains and internationally; their remarkable organizational, communicational and

mobilizing skills/resources; and, finally, considering that the implementation of their salvational agenda in the occupied territories interferes considerably with the creation of a Palestinian state as a viable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, whilst providing a *casus belli* for the propaganda and action of various Islamist movements.

- Insofar as the phenomena are concerned, there is a strong and causative link between politics and religious ideals. Therefore, the modes of mundane engagement cannot be fully grasped without a thorough appreciation of the theological aspirations and goals, which, in turn, derive from a longstanding and complex source of religious thought and imagination - the Apocalyptic-Messianic-Millenarian tradition stretching back at least to ancient Zoroastrianism. Such aspirations and goals must be approached seriously, by granting them the same absolute and coherent standing they possess in the eyes of the activist-believers. Further, not only should one account for these politicized religious phenomena in view of their negative formulations - that is, the antinomian postures against the secular world or the existing order, but also factoring in the creative side of their utopian visions. The mobilizing force of their appeal resides in both aspects.
- Within these politicized forms of religion oriented towards the palingenesis of the current order, there is always a dialectic tension between transcendental ideals and historical reality. If a more apparent contention is that religious beliefs impact on politics, the hypothesis that being actively involved in the political arena implies to some extent abiding or conforming to its rules will be also tested. Especially in the long run, this eventuality might considerably impinge on or even alter the religiously sanctioned identity, values and goals of the theo-political movement. In so doing, earthly involvement can generate the premises for spiritual crises and/or schismatic-secessionist impulses within the movement.

The dissertation in a nutshell

The dissertation is divided in two parts. In the first section (Chapters I - IV), pertinent themes and concerns generally associated with the human religious imagination and, more narrowly, with the Jewish and Christian tradition, are critically analyzed, mainly from anthropological, philosophical, Biblical-theological, and sociological perspectives. This sets out the necessary background for the second section (Chapter V and VI), in which Jewish Religious Zionism and Evangelical Zionism are treated in detail, opening the ground also to the analytical tools of political science. Section I takes a great deal of care in addressing various and complex theological ideas and themes, since many of them, although not in their original shape or spirit, are still circulating in the common parlance of both Christian Zionism and Jewish Religious Zionism. The study aims to demonstrate that the ways in which these two religious movements are currently operating in the Israeli and US political arenas are heavily contingent upon their idiosyncratic interpretation of ancient theological concepts.

The first chapter enquires into the origins of religious beliefs and practices by putting forward a working hypothesis concerning the sources of the religious imagination. This is understood as a humanly constructed universe of meaning, a construction undertaken by symbolic means in order to maintain or restore order and harmony to natural and social relationships that have been or are at risk of being broken and plunged into chaos. Furthermore, religion is regarded as the anthropological phenomenon par excellence: the articulation of an objective, morally binding, and all-embracing 'sacred canopy' remains a peculiar human feature, something which transcends our biological make-up, marking a distance between man and all other species. The perspective proposed here is that religion should be understood as a symbolic response to a natural inadequacy located in human interiority. Lacking sufficient instinctual means to react to the challenges of their environment, human beings act through symbols, conditioning their behaviour by means of abstractions. If there is a plausible line of continuity between humanity's in-built weaknesses and the establishment of his symbolic-cultural nature, the religious imagination should be read as the furthest extension of that line. Religious ideals, paraphernalia and ritualism permit us to organize all the impressions that impinge upon us, grounding the precarious reality of human life to the all-embracing fabric of meaning of the 'world above'. I am conscious that this line

of inquiry inspired by Arnold Gehlen's 'outdated' philosophical anthropology might be easily charged with essentialism, reductionism and even detachment from religious realities and praxes. Nevertheless, I also believe that the plausibility and legitimacy of any chosen interpretative, methodological or heurist approach is ultimately conditioned by personal biases and, to an equal extent, by the intellectual curiosity that approach is set to satisfy. In keeping with this, I never found, in my ten-year research on the subject, a more compelling argument than the one raised by Isaiah Berlin on the meaningful correlation between 'the crooked timber of humanity' and the relentless strivings of our species towards the restoration of some sort of wholeness, harmony and perfection.²⁶

The purpose of Chapter II is to analyse, within restricted limits of the Jewish and Christian tradition, key Eschatological ideas and themes. I interpret the religious reasoning about the Last Things as a way to offer a definitive explanation to the anomic phenomena of suffering, evil, and above all, death. This chapter also highlights the theological and cultural import of crucial concepts introduced by the Hebrew prophets and later embraced and suitably adapted by early Christianity: a conception of history according to which time no longer revolves in an endless sequence of circles, but flows linearly towards a single dénouement; the idea of an interventionist God and a providential plan of salvation; and the multiple formulations of the doctrine of the Covenant - a doctrine normatively binding the Chosen People to their Land of Promise. In its last section of chapter, I address theologically the all-too-often confused and misconceived Apocalyptic doctrine, whilst also offering a brief historical contextualization of its birth and development. I argue that the Apocalypse does not represent a mere theory of disaster, but a theory of disaster endowed with ultimate meaning. Once interpreted from the standpoint of its etymology, the Apocalypse does not lay its primary emphasis on the cataclysmic circumstances leading to the end of the world, but rather on its revelatory essence and rhetorical function. Essentially, the Apocalyptic is a divine message granting a definitive sense of closure and the complete re-winning of mankind's ontological deficiency; however, in order to come to fruition, that ultimate dream of future bliss imposes the drastic demise of the present state of affairs.

The compensatory complement of Apocalyptic catastrophe is the ideal of the 'Millennium': a changeless and timeless condition of perfection, harmony and happiness, which is to be reached at the end of time, either on this earth or in heaven. If the human condition is marked by finitude and deficiency, the

Millennium transcends that condition by envisaging an order of permanent fulfilment and salvation. By drawing on the contributions of leading theologians, historians of religions, and sociologists, Chapter III firstly identifies the Biblical roots and meaning of the term 'Millennium', clarifying some of the most common misunderstandings or unwarranted simplifications. Next, the chapter provides a synthetic yet exhaustive treatment of the various theories about the nature and internal logic of the Millenarian appeal, and offers a critical evaluation of those seminal studies that have attempted to identify the external, predisposing circumstances (natural, cultural, historical, sociological, and psychological), under which Millenarian phenomena tend to arise and gain momentum. Chapter III emphasizes how more fruitful possibilities of understanding Millenarianism emerge not only from historically contingent events considered as 'objective' explanatory causes, but also from a careful analysis of the symbolic and mythic structures whereby those events are interpreted. In keeping with these principles, both Apocalypticism and Millenarianism are seen as a mode of persuasive communication, which justifies and neutralizes the problem of evil, human suffering, and chaos, primarily by rhetorical means. The chapter concludes by considering the distinctive features of Jewish Messianism, the Biblical moorings of the term, its differences/communalities with Christian Millenarianism, and the more general understanding of Messianism as a religious-political phenomenon centred on a 'numinous leader', as agent of the salvation agenda.

The argumentative line underpinning the first section of the dissertation culminates in Chapter IV. In this chapter, I argue that the drive for absolute politics stemming from the Apocalyptic, Millenarian, and Messianic ideal primarily resides in the twofold character of its symbolic structure: a worldview that is dualistic in terms of the current age, which it strives to overthrow; and monistic in terms of the future, which it strives to instantiate. The radical disjunction between the present order and that to come can be resolved only by collapsing the manifold variations of a plural world into two great categories, and then urging a final synthesis which makes homogeneity prevail. Next, the chapter takes into consideration the two archetypal modes by which Jewish Messianism and Christian Millenarianism attain to ultimate salvation. According to the catastrophic mode, which reprises the original rationales of Apocalypticism, the quest for final salvation points towards an extramundane dimension. The current age is perceived as utterly meaningless and thus is consigned to annihilation by divine fiat. Meaning is expected out of a cosmic

upheaval, which shatters the world so as to renew it into a state of celestial perfection. With the progressive mode of salvation, the goal of ultimate fulfilment is instead pursued within the fabric of the present dispensation. The flow of history cannot be abruptly abolished since it represents the temporal dimension through which, under the divine providence's lead, meaning is gradually created out of spiritually inspired human action. I make clear that, rather than being mutually exclusive, these archetypal modes of salvation should be understood as the two polarities of the same magnetic field, which relentlessly reacts and adjusts to the historical variations of the external world. The chapter clarifies and underscores the relevance of these nuanced theological aspects given their impact on the current theo-political agenda and modus operandi of both Christian Zionism and Jewish Religious Zionism.

Chapter V opens the second section of the dissertation by offering an understanding of the first case study: Jewish Religious Zionism. In particular, the chapter aims at uncovering the theological reasons motivating its engagement in Israeli politics, and it does so by drawing upon the themes and arguments that have been previously developed on Jewish Eschatology and Messianic thought. To prove a meaningful relationship between beliefs and political action, this chapter highlights how, according to the Religious Zionist worldview, the sanctity of the Land of Israel, and the imperative to conquer it and not to compromise its integrity, derives directly from the Mystical-Cabbalist outlook of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. The rabbi viewed redemption as a gradualist process of cosmic repair, in which the Chosen People played a purposive role not only for the sake of Israel, but also for that of the rest of the world. If activist participation in settling all Greater Israel hastens the coming of the Messianic age, even a minimal withdrawal from it would entail contravening God's will, halting the process of universal salvation, and setting the entire cosmos out of joint. Next, the chapter reveals the principal points underlying the ideology of Gush Emunim - the settlers' movement inspired by Kookist outlook, and the historical phases that brought its national-religious agenda to the fore of Israeli politics. I emphasize how Gush Emunim represents a paradigmatic example of modern theo-politics, but also a 'revitalisation movement' which fights for the Judaisation of the occupied territories (settling in the land of Judea and Samaria), and at the same time to bring about a Messianic renaissance in the wider secular society (settling in the heart of the Israelis). At the core of this politically engaged form of Messianism lies the insistence that the Zionism and its state are mundane tools in religious hands.

These are holy because, even if unwittingly, they serve the divine process of redemption leading towards the creation of a 'Torahcracy' - a Jewish theocratic order shaped upon the Torah's principles and laws, and also including the entire Land of Israel as recounted in the Bible. On this ground, the foundation of Israel in May 1948 and the territorial expansion following the Six Day War were hailed as miraculous events confirming the imminence of that final fulfilment, and the plausibility of Gush Emunim's theo-political agenda. The chapter also investigates the dialectic tension between the disembedding effect of highly globalized Modernity (McWorld) and the resurgence of ethno-religious tribalism in the Israeli context (Jewish Jihad). Following the arguments of sociologist Uri Ram, I put forward the hypothesis that Gush Emunim and its palingenetic aspirations represent a 'Mc-Jihad' paradox: a syncretic compromise between the lures of secularized Modernity and a spiritual yearning for a return into the bosom of Biblical Judaism. The chapter concludes by taking into account the dangers that might arise from a disconfirmation or frustration of Gush Emunim's Messianic programme centred on Eretz Ysrael. In particular, I hint at the hypothetical scenario in which parts of the Old City of Jerusalem or Jewish settlements/outposts in the West Bank were transferred to Arab control, and the Apocalyptically-driven violence that the extremist fringes could consequently resort to so as to precipitate total redemption.

Chapter VI focuses on the second theo-political case study: US Christian Zionism, the most obscure and least explored End Time constituency that animated the neo-conservative project of a 'New American Empire' in the eight years of the Bush Administration. In view of literal but nonetheless arbitrary interpretations of selected prophetic passages in the Old and New Testament, some congregations and churches in the Bible Belt are even more dedicated than the majority of Jewish interest groups in providing vast political, financial and practical support to Israel. According to their Millenarian hopes, a Jewish return to and monopoly over the Land of Inheritance is a key prerequisite for attaining Christian wondrous salvation. This phenomenon is embedded in the tradition of US conservative Evangelicalism and advocates that at the end of time Christ will return to rule the world for a thousand years before the final judgment. He will do so centred on Greater Israel and focused on Jerusalem. I open the last chapter by teasing out and unpacking the core theological tenets underpinning the outlook of Evangelical Zionism, tracing them back to John Nelson Darby's belief system known as premillennial Dispensationalism. This is intended to allow the reader to fully appreciate that beguiling force of

attraction that, even in this case, keeps Eschatological aspirations and politics in close proximity. Next, I describe how, in a way strikingly similar to Gush Emunim, Israel's foundation in 1948 and its territorial gains after the 1967 war were the two prophetic fulfilments triggering a 'participatory shift' which turned US Dispensationalism into a key political player. I detail the main earthly initiatives by which, since the beginning of the 1970, millions of American End Time believers mobilized themselves so as to favour a Jewish maximalist expansion beyond the Green Line and at the same time derail any diplomatic resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Next, the chapter accounts for the 'elective affinities' between US Christian Zionism and Gush Emunim in terms of intolerance and exclusionary thinking towards the Arab population, and address the strategic ties US Evangelicals have formed over the years with the Likud Party. I also stress how, in their commitment to keep Israel strong and moving in direction prophesied in the Bible, Dispensationalists have been deliberately backing some of the extremist elements within Israeli religious right - such as the Kach Movement and the new and emerging Hilltop Youth. After having hinted at the ethical downfalls of the so-called 'Armageddon theology' – an outlook that envisages purgative violence as a legitimate means to bring about the wholesale regeneration of the world, I highlight how the Dispensationalist love for Israel betrays clear anti-Semitic prejudices and stereotypes. Further, I submit that the Dispensationalist view of the Jewish people as 'cannon fodder' for Millenarian fulfilment is one of major obstacles to genuine and effective interfaith dialogue between Judaism and Christianity. The chapter concludes with an appraisal of that unique constellation of factors that after 9/11 brought the Darby's End Time prophecies to the fore within US society and culture, and by briefly assessing whether Barack Obama's 2008 election heralded the end of this Apocalyptic Zeitgeist, and, accordingly, thwarted the Evangelical influence both over US foreign politics and in the Middle East.

Some remarks on epistemological and methodological concerns

Although theological concepts and concerns conspicuously feature in the following pages, this dissertation does not privilege theology as a unique perspective of inquiry. Nor does it assert its defining epistemological and methodological approach as fully comprehensive and exhaustive to discuss and reason about the human appreciation of the sacred. On the conventional

account, argues Schubert M. Ogden, 'theology differs from other forms of reflection, including religious studies, for one or both of two reasons: (1) because it has to appeal to special criteria of truth for some if not all of its assertions; and (2) because the theologian has to be a believer who already holds these assertions to be true'.²⁷ This study does not fall into the remit of theology not only because neither of the two abovementioned criteria are fulfilled, but also in view of the following: it became clear from the outset of my doctorate that, in whichever fashion I framed my hypotheses and, accordingly, conducted my research, I would not have been able to confine it to one single discipline. A religious studies approach was indeed more suitable, being a distinctively inter and intra-disciplinary field, including a wide range of disciplines, theories and methods for studying religious ideas, texts and practices. As the reader might immediately note, throughout the dissertation I deployed and often overlapped various modes of investigation. In addition to theology, these include anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, cultural and literary criticism, political sciences and theory, etc. Further, in keeping with one of the aspects defining a religious studies approach, I always do my best to contextualize religious phenomena - be it beliefs, myths, rituals, institutions or praxes, by keeping in mind that these arise within a given and ever changing cultural, historical and social setting, which invariably affects their development.

My arguments about Jewish Messianism and Christian Millenarianism never entail a lack of respect for the views and practices in question, let alone an anti-religious attitude, either explicit or underlying. Nor do these arguments challenge or preclude the possibility of a deity and/or of transcendental truths. As historian Bruce Lincoln puts it, religion is 'that discourse whose defining characteristic is its desire to speak of things eternal and transcendent with an authority equally transcendent and eternal'. In 'the sharpest possible contrast', religious studies, along with any other discipline within the Humanities spectrum, can instead be categorized as a 'discourse that speaks of things temporal and terrestrial in a fallible voice, while staking its claim to authority on rigorous critical practice'. The present study posits the 'regimes of truth' of the former as an object of investigation whilst privileging the contingent stand of the latter as analytical perspective. In order to be consistent with this methodology, one should aim to discuss 'the temporal, contextual, situated, interested, human, and material dimensions of those [religious] discourses, practices, and institutions that characteristically represent themselves as eternal,

transcendent, spiritual, and divine'.²⁸ This kind of scholarly endeavour might sometimes resist and even reverse the orientation of that sacred dimension with which it concerns itself. However, continues Lincoln, this can and should be done without refuting or disrespecting the utmost and everlasting relevance of religion and the human need to believe. I regard Lincoln's words as being strikingly consonant with both Mosse's and Gopin's cautionary advice: not to underestimate, dismiss or vilify human beliefs - regardless of how contentious, implausible and disturbing they might be; but, rather, make an effort towards understanding them from the perspectives of those who embrace them. As far as my research is concerned, this kind of intellectual empathy never implies endorsement and represents the way forward to tackle the political implications of Messianic and Millenarian belief-systems.

¹ See especially the afterword 'Totalitarian Modernity' in Emilio Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology 1918-1925*, New York: Enigma, 2005, pp. 363-401; and *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, Harvard: HUP, 1996.

² Emilio Gentile, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology 1918-1925*, op. cit., p. 367.

³ See Renzo De Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism*, Harvard: HUP, 1977, p. 14.

⁴ See George L. Mosse, *Masses and Man, Nationalist and Fascist Perception of Reality*, Detroit: WSUP, 1987; Uriel Tal, *Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Third Reich*, London: Routledge, 2004; Zeev Sternhell, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, Princeton: PUP, 1994; Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, London: LCUP, 1995; and Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism, The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, London: Palgrave, 2007.

⁵ On the Fascist ideology as a syncretic cultural compound borrowing even from Giuseppe Mazzini's democratic idealism see especially Emilio Gentile, *La Grande Italia, The Myth of the Nation in the 20th Century*, Madison: WUP, 2009.

⁶ On this subject see Emilio Gentile, *Against Caesar, Christianity and Totalitarianism in the Epoch of Fascisms*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 2010 (in Italian).

⁷ Ernst Cassirer, *Symbol, Myth, and Culture: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer, 1935-1945*, Yale: YUP, 1981, p. 288.

⁸ Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, Princeton: PUP, 2006, p. 36.

⁹ See Emilio Gentile, 'Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definition and Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation' in Roger Griffin (ed.), *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, London: Routledge, 2005, pp. 43-52.

¹⁰ Ernest B. Koenker, *Secular Salvations: The Rites and Symbols of Political Religions*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965, p. vii. Quoted in Said Amir Arjomand, 'Religion and the Diversity of Normative Orders' in Said Amir Arjomand (ed.), *The Political Dimensions of Religion*, New York: SUNY, 1993, p. 52.

¹¹ Quoted in John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, London: Routledge, 2005, p. xii.

¹² See Stanley G. Payne, 'On the Heuristic Value of the Concept of Political Religion and Its Application' in Roger Griffin (ed.), *The Sacred in the Twentieth-Century Politics*, London: Palgrave, 2008, pp. 31-32.

¹³ I borrowed this term from Ian Buruma's and Avishai Margalit's groundbreaking investigation *Occidentalism, A Short History of Anti-Westernism*, London: Atlantic Books, 2004.

¹⁴ This aspect represents one of the underlying themes of Griffin's seminal study *Modernism and Fascism, The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, op. cit; and Gentile's work *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism*, Westport: Praeger, 2003.

¹⁵ See *Ibid.*, pp. 1-8.

¹⁶ In his pioneering work on the subject, Eric Voegelin [*The New Science of Politics*, Chicago: CUP, 1952, p. 131] charged that these political religions were premised on the transposition of the salvational dimension of transcendence into history. Quite poignantly, Voegelin added that '[the] more fervently all human energies are thrown into the great enterprise of salvation through world-immanent action, the farther [mankind] moves away from the life of the spirit', and, so doing, murders God.

¹⁷ See Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Princeton: PUP, 2005, pp. 6-7.

¹⁸ See Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 38-40.

¹⁹ The idea that the participation of the Italian people to the Great War would have been a collective expiation from the past and at the same time a violent rite of passage and purification towards the dawn of a new civilization is the main argument of Emilio Gentile's studies *Apocalypse of Modernity, The Great War for the New Man*, Milano: Mondadori, 2008 [in Italian]; and 'The Myth of National Regeneration in Italy: From Modernist Avant-Garde to Fascism' in Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff (ed.), *Fascist Visions, Art and Ideology in France and Italy*, Princeton: PUP, 1997, pp. 25-45.

²⁰ See Roger Griffin, 'God's Counterfeiters' in Roger Griffin (ed.), *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, op. cit., p. 15.

²¹ This approach has been termed by George L. Mosse 'methodological empathy' in *The crisis of German ideology: Intellectual origins of the Third Reich*, New York: Howard Fertig, 1964 quoted in Roger Griffin, *A Fascist Century*, London: Palgrave, 2008, p. 211.

²² See Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon, The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking*, Oxford: OUP, 2000, pp. 35-53.

²³ Ibid., p. 13. The same argument is further developed in R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred, Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*, New York: Carnegie, 2000.

²⁴ Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 18.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

²⁶ As Berlin so magisterially puts it, a constant theme which runs through all religious and secular Utopias, and also in Western philosophical and political thought is the idea 'that once upon the time there was a perfect state, then some enormous disaster took place'. Once 'the pristine unity is shattered', the rest of human history is nothing but 'an agonized effort to piece together the broken fragments of the perfect whole with which the universe began, and to which it may yet return'. To Berlin, this obsessive striving towards regaining a lost harmony and perfection of the beginning was one of the main sources of all those nefarious attempts undertaken 'to foist an artificial order on a reluctant humanity, of trying to fit human beings, like bricks, into a preconceived structure, force them into Procrustean beds, and vivisect men in some fanatically held schema'. See Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, London: Fontana, pp. 23-4; pp. 44-45; and pp. 46-47.

²⁷ See Schubert M. Ogden, 'Theology and Religious Studies: Their Difference and the Difference It Makes', *American Academy of Religion*, Volume XLVI, Issue 1, March 1978, pp. 3-17.

²⁸ See Bruce Lincoln, 'Theses on Method', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, vol. 8, 1996, pp. 225-27.

Chapter I: The Sacred Canopy

This chapter will enquire into the origins of religious beliefs and practices by putting forward a working hypothesis concerning the sources of religious imaginary. We will argue this imaginary to be a humanly constructed universe of meaning, a construction undertaken by symbolic means in order to maintain or restore order and harmony to natural and social relationships that have been or are at risk of being broken and plunged into chaos. Furthermore, religion will be regarded as the anthropological phenomenon *par excellence*. The articulation of an objective, morally binding, and all-embracing 'sacred canopy' remains a peculiar human feature, something which transcends our biological make-up marking a distance between man and other non-human species. The essential perspective proposed here is that religion is to be understood as a symbolic response to a natural inadequacy located in human interiority. We believe this to be an appropriate departure point so as to investigate, in the next chapters, contemporary Apocalyptic discourses and manifestations.

It has been recently observed that to make interiority the privileged *locus* of religion is a culturally and historically bound reductionism that normalizes one aspect or dimension of religious phenomena, while simultaneously dismissing and stigmatizing others. To call specific attention to interiority has fallen out of favour in the academic world since it would universalise the peculiar cultural-religious background of Protestantism - a form of religiosity whose styles and codes are distinctively oriented towards belief and the individual status of worshippers.¹ A narrow formulation based on interiority would therefore ignore, distort or relegate to the margins all other religious traditions, which designate external or community-based criteria in order to channel and express their identity.² On these premises, Bruce Lincoln issued a flexible definition of religion that, aiming to subsume wide variations, comprises four distinctive domains:

A discourse whose concerns transcend the human, temporal, and contingent, and that claims for itself a similarly transcendent status. (...) *A set of practices* whose goal is to reproduce a proper world and/or proper human subjects, as defined by the religious discourse to which these (ethical and ritual) practices are connected. (...) *A community* whose members construct their identity with reference to a religious discourse and its attendant practices. (...) *An institution* that regulates religious discourse, practices, and community, reproducing them over time and modifying them as necessary, while asserting their eternal validity and transcendental value.³

Lincoln grounds the validity of his definition in the overriding importance that all religions seem to manifest outside individuals, in the societal sphere, as

a cohesive factor. Further, he argues that 'discourse' and 'community' ought to be valued over 'belief' in light of both epistemological and ontological considerations. Firstly, there is no 'unmediated access' to moods, motivation or conceptions of a believer. One's interiority may be investigated only when it finds imperfect and sometimes quite distorted expressions in acts of discourse and practice. Secondly, beliefs 'never arise *de novo* in pristine interior reflection and experience', but, rather, are the end result of a process of socialization in which individuals are exposed to 'significant others' - that is, parents, friends, family, and members of the clergy - 'who signal what they believe and what they believe ought to be believed'.⁴ Lincoln concludes that, in the process in which these statements are received, metabolized, and internalized as religious, discourse and community are both logically and chronologically prior to belief.⁵

We recognize the utility of Lincoln's intellectual effort to synthesise a 'multi-factorial' definition, identifying a range of traits or functions, none of which is in itself sufficient. To set out a single 'gravitational rule' would inevitably miss out the irreducible and the multifaceted nature of the religious. Yet, we consider the four-domain definition as still under-representing a primary argument that has much to do with man's interiority and encompasses all religions: mankind's need to believe. We assume this need to be logically and chronologically prior to any other religious manifestations or characteristics. To account for any kind of religion without problematizing the reason of its origin could be equated to an attempt to stage the Hamlet without the prince. Having little choice but to reduce, we set the commencement of our hypothesis in the anthropological domain.

1.1 The unfinished animal

Addressing the key features of mankind, the anthropologist Arnold Gehlen hypothesized that, in terms of morphology, man represents the 'not yet determined animal'.⁶ The fact of being 'unfinished' or 'not firmly established' has to be understood as essential to man's identity and place in the world. To Gehlen, the origin and nature of the problems we face in life are consequences of a singular lack of biological means:

Man is, in contrast to all other mammals, primarily characterized by deficiencies, which, in an exact, biological sense, qualify as lack of adaptation, lack of specialisation, primitive states, and failure to develop, and which are essentially negative features. Humans have no natural protection against inclement weather; we have no natural organs for defence and attack but yet neither are our bodies

designed for flight. Most animals surpass man as far as acuity of senses is concerned. Man has what could be termed a dangerous lack of true instincts and needs an unusual long period of protection and care during his infancy and childhood. In other words, under natural conditions, among dangerous predators, man would long ago have died.⁷

It is in comparison to other animals that the structure of our body appears to be a paradox and stands out sharply. Man is hopelessly 'not adapted' because of an instinctual structure which is both *undirected* and *unspecialized*. His genes are silent, whereas the non-human animals enter the world with intrinsic sources of information. Benefiting from genetically directed drives, non-human animals can always rely on automatic and adequate responses to the challenges of their world. Their world is 'predictable' in terms of its possibilities: each animal lives in an environment that is specific to its particular species. There is a 'bee-world', a 'dog-world', or a 'beaver-world'. In order to build a dam, a beaver needs only an appropriate site and proper materials. A physiology will develop a mode of procedure, a spontaneous template in terms of which the dam will be built in harmony with the totality of the conditions contained in an entire complex of surroundings. In this sense, non-human creatures, both as species and as individuals, live within familiar habitats, 'closed worlds' whose structures are pre-determined by biological equipments.⁸

By contrast, there is no man-world in the above sense. Man does not live in a state of organic or instinctive adaptation to a set of definite, specifiable external conditions. Given the astonishing generality, diffuseness, and variability of his innate response capacities, man's world is *open*, dramatically unpredictable in its infinite possibilities and surprises. The unfinished animal is denied the direct gratification of his life needs that an animal enjoys. He cannot pursue the 'short cut taken by the animal, whose instinct operates through its senses to find its goals, that mother nature, in her great wisdom, has made readily available'.⁹ World-openness implies not only incapacity to follow the great natural rhythm, but also defenceless receptivity to both internal and external stimuli which - not having an innate function as signals - cannot be interpreted or mastered. This flood of 'unsorted impulses' represents a chronic burden to mankind, a further source of vulnerability stemming from the lack of physical specializations.¹⁰

The underlying thesis of Gehlen's anthropology is that all these deficiencies in human constitution, which under natural conditions would constitute grave handicaps, become, through man's own initiative and action, a very means of survival. Being deficient biologically, man must depend upon himself in order to develop his potentials:

[Man] must confront the world and its constant surprises and render it available, knowable, intimately familiar, and usable, so that he can engage in planned and appropriate work to create what he needs, what is not readily available to him. (...) In order to survive he must master and recreate nature, and for reason must experience the world. There is no 'natural man' in a strict sense - that is, no human society without weapons, without fire, without prepared artificial food, without shelter, and without system of cooperation. Culture is therefore the 'second nature' - man's restructured nature, within which he can survive. 'Unnatural' culture is the product of a unique being, itself of an unnatural construction in comparison to animals. The cultural world exists for man in exactly the same way in which the environment exists for an animal.¹¹

The unfinished animal faces the challenge of interpreting his own experience. He confronts the world's constant surprises developing thoughts, hypothesis, patterns, and techniques: ways of coping with particular circumstances. Gehlen underscores the fact that knowledge of the world and action in it share a common root, they are parts of the same process. A cultural interpretation of nature is the necessary premise for its transformation to suit man's own needs and purposes. In other words, unable to react *naturally*, man must act *artificially*, completing himself by a new birth and development. Culture is thus the distinctive human artifice and endeavour in the world, our second constitution and paradoxical 'unnatural' nature.

1.2 A relief from the Maelstrom

The notion of 'relief' is another central category of Gehlenian thought. If the world's field of surprises and biological profusion must be worked out with care and foresight, this intelligent planning lies in man's deliberate detachment from the immediacy of reality itself. Because of world-openness, man is dangerously exposed to an abundance of stimulations and impressions he must learn to cope with. Some sort of stability is achieved by reducing the excessive income of impulses to certain productive 'centres of meaning'. Man, relying on his intellectual means, formulates ideas. Gehlen suggests that this process of self-orientation always involves an act of *drawing back* from the points of direct contact with reality. Relief from the pressure of the flood of impulses is found by breaking the 'spell of immediacy' by means of 'reflexivity'.¹² Since his needs cannot be satisfied pursuing the shortcut available to animals through their instincts, man must be capable of deferring them in order to find enduring gratification. This means that a 'hiatus' - a void - has to be created between needs and conditions necessary for their gratification.¹³

Edgar Allan Poe's short story *A Descent into the Maelstrom*¹⁴ provides us with a suitable parable for discerning Gehlen's concept of relief. In the tale, a Norwegian fisherman and his brother are caught in the mouth of a Maelstrom, a terrific whirlpool threatening to suck their frail boat into an inky abyss. Poe's novel may serve as an allegory in light of the fact that, in the symbolic imaginary of countless cultures and religions, the myth of the vortex is always a representation of chaos.¹⁵ The strategy that the fisherman chooses for escaping the deadly waters of the Maelstrom is based on the refusal to obey his primary and lacking biological responses. Rather than his natural instincts, he entrusts his capacity of deferral, his ability to establish *artificially* a hiatus between him and the flux of chaotic stimuli. While his elder brother is paralysed by the approaching disaster, he takes time to reflect, acting as if it was not him 'involved'. It is there, on the brink of the abyss, that his original terror was suddenly replaced by an 'unnatural curiosity'.¹⁶ The sailor takes courage and looks once again upon scene, becoming aware of certain regularities in the movement of the pieces that were being driven around in circles together with the boat. In short, by both observing and reflecting on the basis of his memory, he formulates a hypothesis, a connecting picture of the vortex which is threatening to engulf him. He notices that some cylindrical and smaller objects do not sink into the whirlpool, but are blown about above the water's surface. It is by recognizing an orderly pattern emerging from the turmoil of the Maelstrom that the fisherman can make the appropriate move: abandoning the sinking boat, he wraps himself around a steamer trunk and, thus, escapes death. Unlike his brother who, unable to turn his thoughts away from chaos, remains fatally involved in it, the fisherman survives by deferring and, therefore, 'defeating' the immediacy of the events confronting him.

It is in a certain 'measure of detachment', Norbert Elias observes, that our distinctively human capacity of symbolic representation lies.¹⁷ Experiences at first appearing wholly beyond our control may be 'domesticated' by forming an integrating symbolic vision, that is a model, a theory to act upon in order to find relief from the Maelstrom.

1.3 The world as an idea

In his *Essay on Man*, Ernst Cassirer gave the problem of cultural knowledge a new turn, maintaining that the symbolic quality of thought represents a specific characteristic of man's behaviour - a characteristic which had its roots in our nature and was demonstrated to be entirely nonexistent in the non-human biological world. Symbolism - as expressed in language, art, philosophy and religion - was originated by an 'evolutionary switch' from an instinctual system based on signal responses to a new, perhaps precarious and even inexplicable, level of organic existence. Signals and symbols belong to two diverse universes of discourse:

Symbols - in the proper sense of this term - cannot be reduced to mere signals. A signal is a part of the physical world of being, a symbol is a part of the human world of meaning. Signals are 'operators'; symbols are 'designators'. (...) In short, we may say that the animal possesses a practical imagination and intelligence whereas man alone has developed a new form: a symbolic imagination and intelligence.¹⁸

In his assumptions about man's intelligence and imagination, Cassirer makes no attempt to introduce principles not in consonance with empirical evidence: he redefines man as an *animal symbolicum* by designating that 'novel factor' introduced by human life into the history of organic forms. Our actions are not the end result of an immediate connection between biological needs and their satisfaction. In our behaviour, the spell of immediacy is broken by intercession of a 'third link', the symbolic system. This will open a new way to mankind, the way of civilization:

Man has discovered a new method of adapting himself to his environment. Between the receptor system and the effector system, which are to be found in all animal species, we find in man a third link which we may describe as the symbolic system. This acquisition transforms the whole of human life. As compared with other animals man lives not merely in a broader reality; he lives in a new dimension of reality. There is an unmistakable difference between organic reactions and human responses. In the first case a direct and immediate answer is given to an outward stimulus; in the second case the answer is delayed. It is interrupted and retarded by a slow and complicated process of thought.¹⁹

A characterization of man as an *animal symbolicum* is perfectly in line with Gehlen's anthropology. Our unique powers are concentrated on a new level of abstract thought and our knowledge always implies a sort of breach with life's immanence. It is worth noting that a symbolical acquisition of the world requires a sort of 'transcendence' - a projection of ourselves towards a broader dimension of reality which is based on an act of detachment:

All knowledge of the world, and all strictly spiritual action upon the world require that I thrust the world back from itself, that, in contemplation as in action, I gain a certain distance from it. Animals do not know this distance: the animal lives in his environment; he does not place himself over against it and so represent it. This acquisition of the world as an idea is, rather, the aim and product of the symbolic forms - the result of language, myth, religion, art, and theoretical knowledge. Each of these builds up its intelligible realm of intrinsic meaning, which stands out sharply and clearly from any merely purposive behaviour within the biological sphere.²⁰

There is no return from this distinctive acquisition of the world. Once the natural immediacy has been symbolically mediated, reversed into the cultural order, human life has been condemned to 'ex-ist', to stand outside, rather than to be.²¹ Man's mere survival now relies on the 'webs of significance' he himself has spun and in which he is suspended. Culture, man's second nature, is a cage whose key has been lost.²² Man is obliged to remain in a constant dialogue with himself, consulting the incessant outpouring of his reflexivity: all the words, images, myths, faiths, hopes, fears and illusions forming a 'symbolic system', that is an artificial universe of meanings. What we take for granted as 'truths', Fredrik Nietzsche instead defined as

a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten their illusive nature.²³

Rather than its illusive essence, it is worth underlining the functional role of a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms. A symbolic system may be defined as a complex assemblage of sources of illumination capable of establishing unity in the multiform. By subsuming and integrating different perceptions, ideas and stimuli into larger, more universal structures of meaning, a symbolic system assuages that peculiar desire for order - for logical and causal correlations - that dominates every area of human experience. In this sense, the etymology offers a significant indication: the Greek term 'symbolon' recalls the idea of convergence, reduction to 'unity'; whereas its opposite 'diabolon' means disintegration, fragmentation and disorder. But, interpreting the relation between the notions as complementary and dialectic may dissolve their apparent antithesis. Granted that disorder spoils symbolic patterns of unity and order, it also provides the material of such patterns. If order (symbol), implies a restriction, a convergence from all possible relations and meanings to a limited set of them, chaos, by implication, is unlimited. No pattern has been realized in it, but 'its potential for patterning is indefinite'.²⁴ Man's outpouring

of thought - what has been defined by Otto Rank as 'an over-production of truth which cannot be consumed'²⁵ - has been being built extensively upon that potential.

1.4 Cultural patterns

Drawing heavily on Gehlen's anthropological schemes, Clifford Geertz spoke of man as a creature who could not exist without a cultural self-completion. Our distinguishing feature, as human beings, is less the 'sheer ability in learning - remarkable as that is - than how much and what particular sorts of things we are obliged to learn in order to survive'. We constantly live in an 'information gap', a vacuum between what our bodies tell us and what we have to know in order to function.²⁶ This intrinsic, biological chasm is bridged by

extrinsic sources of information in terms of which human life can be patterned: extra-personal mechanisms for the perception, understanding, judgement, and manipulation of the world. Culture patterns (religious, philosophical, aesthetic, scientific, ideological) are 'programs', they provide a blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes, much as genetic systems provide other animals with a template for the organisation of organic processes.²⁷

Cultural patterns are projects and prescriptions of which man is author and recipient: symbolically-created systems of meaning according to which we give form, order, point, and direction to our life. Their action is twofold: they give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality 'both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves'.²⁸ Religion is an essential part of these creative answers to the challenges of the world. Before criticisms were moved against the notion of 'interiority', Geertz's definition of religion as a 'cultural pattern' was hegemonic. The classic section on which a generation of anthropologists was trained understood religion as

a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conception of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.²⁹

The key assumption of Geertz's definition is that religion is to be understood as man's symbolic projection, grounded in specific infrastructures of his nature. Religion, so interpreted, spreads beyond its specifically metaphysical-theological context 'to formulate conceptions of a general order of existence in terms of which a wide spectrum of experiences - intellectual, emotional, moral - can be given meaningful form'.³⁰ Anthropologically, the significance of religion,

for an individual or a community, lies in its symbolic capacity to fence off chaos.

As already pointed out, man's alternative to his cultural self-completion is dissolution in an absurd world. Culture - the accumulated totality of different patterns - is not the ornament of human existence, but the principal basis for its specificity, an essential condition for it. Undirected by symbolic patterns, man's behaviour would be 'virtually ungovernable, a chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions, his experience virtually shapeless'.³¹ This dependence is confirmed whenever the general guidance such patterns momentarily offer is lost or undermined. Even the remotest sign that we may prove unable to cope with one or another aspect of our life raises in us unbearable anxieties:

Man can adapt himself somehow to anything his imagination can deal with, but he cannot come to terms with Chaos. Because his characteristic function and highest asset is conception, his greatest fright is to meet what he cannot construe - the 'uncanny', as it is popularly called.³²

What really horrifies man is less the lack of interpretations than the lack of interpretability. Our symbolic sources of illumination must prove efficacious in subsuming the unfamiliar into the familiar, promptly building an algorithm, an analogy, metaphor or, for a believer, a theodicy. Our power of endurance in the world is limited by the scope of our analytical, ideational and ordering capacity. As Albert Camus reminded us, 'a world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger'.³³

To experience the uncanny (what cannot be construed symbolically) remains the most radical challenge to the proposition that life is comprehensible and that we can orient effectively within it. The prospect man seems least able to tolerate is the threat to his powers of conception: a suggestion that his ability to create, grasp, and use interpretative patterns may fail him. This undermines his most general ability to understand the world, raises the uncomfortable question of whether the beliefs which he holds about nature are workable, the 'standard of truth' he uses valid. Once that web of significance has been spun, the *animal symbolicum* cannot relinquish sense without fragmenting his subjectivity. Every kind of religion, however primitive, which hopes to persist amongst men, must assuage that 'metaphysical anxiety arising when empirical phenomena threaten to remain intransigently opaque':

For those able to embrace them, and as long as they are able to embrace them, religious symbols provide a cosmic guarantee not only for their ability to comprehend the world, but also, comprehending it, to give precision to their feeling, a definition to their emotions which enables them to endure it.³⁴

For our purposes, the main point to be stressed here is that the drive to fabricate meaning is to be considered one of the defining properties of our species. If there is a line of continuity between man's instinctual deficiencies and the establishment of his symbolic, cultural nature, the human need for a 'sacred canopy' must be read as the furthest extension of that line.

1.5 Symbolically re-instinctivized

Everything which distinguishes man from the animals depends upon an ability to render perceptual stimuli into a schema, and, thus, to dissolve the 'harshness' of natural phenomena into concepts. Lacking biological means to react to the challenges of his environment, man will act through symbols, placing his behaviour under the control of abstractions. In doing so, he will become 'reflexive' and obtain 'relief' from nature. By an act of drawing back and establishing a distance between himself and the immediacy of experience, man will no longer be carried away by sudden impressions. Nietzsche observed that the creation of the cultural order - mankind's second and artificial nature - always entails a sort of 'impoverishment' of the natural one. As he self-orientates in the world, man reduces all the incoming stimuli to certain productive centres of meaning. Only by mediating reality and its multiple stimuli into 'less colourful, cooler concepts', can he 'entrust the guidance of his life and conduct to them'.³⁵ In the realm of symbolical, cultural schemata, man is able to achieve what could never be achieved by means of the vivid first impressions:

the construction of a pyramidal order according to castes and degrees, the creation of a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, and clearly marked boundaries—a new world, one which now confronts that other vivid world of first impressions as more solid, more universal, better known, and more human than the immediately perceived world, and thus as the regulative and imperative world.³⁶

The construction of a 'new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, and clearly marked boundaries' is the outcome of a symbolical reduction. A web of significances spun by mankind confronts and transcends as more solid, universal and realistic the very matter from which it originated: the 'vivid world of first impressions'. To be regulative and imperative - that is, *socially* binding, this order must be internalized as a sequence of objective, non-

hypothetical truths. Put differently, its illusive and artificial essence (the fact of being an impoverishment, a mere abstraction of the natural world) must be necessarily hidden, forgotten, or, as we shall see in the next pages, clothed with a sacred aura of factuality. To take this new world for granted, as something that has always been present, is necessary to its very maintenance. The paradox consists in that, once delivered from the burden of natural immediacy, the lacking animal finds himself newly trapped in a set of cultural modes:

The first [cultural] development in man was based on a weakness. The symbolic modes of behaviour were built into an animal that was acutely prone to anxiety, extremely helpless in his natural state, almost entirely devoid of instincts. The great promise of symbolic modes was that they would infinitely extend the range of this animal's action and perfection, make him truly the prince of the earth, able to continue his adaptation and development in a theoretically limitless horizon of free creativity. But the fact that the symbolic modes were built into an animal with a peculiar weakness gave rise to a paradox: that instead of remaining free and broadly adaptive, man immediately became 'symbolically re-instinctivized', almost as solidly as the other animals were physio-chemically instinctivized. In each human society individuals were programmed into the patterns of the cultural world.³⁷

The initial act of detachment from the natural world in order to acquire relief from its profusion has turned into a further level of involvement, a commitment to a more stringent order: Humankind is now 'symbolically re-instinctivized', programmed into the imperative patterns of the cultural world.

1.6 Nomos

According to Peter Berger's sociological interpretation, the human world is a cultural phenomenon constructed and re-constructed continuously through a dialectic process based on three movements: externalisation, objectivation, and internalization.³⁸ Once again, the meta-narrative upon which Berger draws is the Gehlenian idea of man as an animal 'out of balance' and, thus, compelled to engage in sustained creative action, both symbolical and material, so as to complete the flawed biological processes that brought him into being.

Externalisation is an anthropological necessity. Man, as a result of his deficient instinctual makeup, is obliged to 'externalize' himself, that is to project his own meanings into reality. As man externalizes himself, he fabricates a cultural world. This world-building activity is - always and inevitably - collective and relational in character. Men *together* invent tools, shape language, adhere to values and devise institutions.³⁹ Culture, in all its multiform arrangements, depends upon the essential sociality of mankind. In this sense,

Berger posits society not only as a key outpouring of culture, but as the necessary condition of it. Once it has been unleashed, the cultural world attains the status of objective reality. Projections and patterns now stand 'out there', capable of resisting the desires of their producers.

Analogous processes apply to all social formations, which, despite being extensions of man's subjectivity and remaining real by virtue of his recognition, are apprehended as virtually equivalent to the physical universe in its objective presence - a 'second nature'. In this light, the legitimacy of social coerciveness - the imperative and regulative character of the human world - relies more on society's prerogatives to constitute and impose itself as a 'reality', rather than on the exercise of its control mechanisms.⁴⁰

Internalization represents the final stage of socialisation. The externalized world is 're-absorbed into consciousness' in such a way that its objectivated structures, meanings and values come to determine human subjectivity. An individual may be considered successfully socialized insofar as a sufficient degree of symmetry between objective world and subjective reality is realized and maintained. The achievement of the entire socialization process rests on the last of its movements - in particular, on succeeding in building an analogy between objective and subjective meaning through internalisation. Ideally, a 'natural affiliation' to a given cultural order should be discovered by means of mere introspection. By dialoguing with their consciousness, 'socialized' individuals should be able to encounter and appropriate - as real as attitudes, motives and life projects - institutional programs set out externally by formative agencies such as the state, the political party, the ethnic or the religious community.⁴¹ This intimate dialogue, legitimizing cultural patterns and assuring a line of continuity between generations, maintains the reality of that world of laws, privileges, subordinations, and clearly marked boundaries called society.

Berger defines this three-phase socialisation as a 'nominating' experience. *Nómos* is a Greek term meaning 'law' or 'order'. From a sociological angle, the world-construction may be interpreted as an ordering activity stemming from the peculiar human craving for meaning, a craving that appears to have the 'force of instinct':

The objective *nomos* is internalized in the course of socialization. It is therefore appropriated by the individual to become his own subjective ordering of experience. It is by virtue of this appropriation that the individual can come to 'make sense' of his own biography. The discrepant elements of his past life are ordered in terms of what he 'knows objectively' about his own and others'

condition. His ongoing experience is integrated into the same order, though the latter may have been modified to allow for this integration. The future attains a meaningful shape by virtue of the same order being projected into it. In other words, to live in the social world is to live an ordered and meaningful life.⁴²

Man, biologically denied the ordering skills with which the other animals are endowed, is compelled to impose an order upon his experience. To participate in the society implies cohabiting a *nomos*, to have an imperative and regulative world whose 'clearly marked boundaries' act as a shield against the 'terror of meaninglessness'. To be outside that all-embracing fabric of meaning is to be 'world-less', in other words to return into the pre-cultural condition described by Gehlen. The illusive, artificial nature of man's ordering activity would come to the fore as disquieting. Reality and identity would be immediately questioned, a taken for granted validity reversed into a chaos of spasmodic impulses. As already pointed out, this eventuality represents man's ultimate nightmare. The parting from societal *nomos* submerges him into overwhelming psychological tensions, making anomy (that is, the absence of *nomos*) intolerable to the extent that he may seek the death in preference to it.⁴³

If social institutions are edifices erected against the potent forces of chaos, such forces are endlessly present. If *nomos* is a shield protecting individuals from the collapse into anomie, that shield may one day recede. Every culturally defined order exhibits a remarkable precariousness. Chaos must be kept at bay at all cost, since social institutions' survival and the sanity of their members are at stake. It is at this point that religion enters significantly into our arguments.

1.7 As above, so below

As we have seen, human existence is essentially and inevitably externalizing activity. In its course, men pour out meaning into reality: aesthetic, scientific, philosophical, ideological *nomoi* are externalized and objectivated templates in terms of which human life can be patterned. The ensemble of such blueprints for the organization of social and psychological processes represents a cultural world: a humanly meaningful social order. All these nomic constructions are symbolic systems designed to keep chaos and its terror at bay.

By means of religion, the humanly constructed order is 'cosmicized', that is, projected into a universal frame of reference. Becoming co-extensive to cosmos, *nomos* achieves its ultimate apotheosis. Man's ordering activity, understood cosmically, is endowed with a stability deriving from more powerful sources

than historical efforts of human beings.⁴⁴ One of the key features of a cosmic legitimisation concerns the fact that religious narratives work so as to disguise the constructed nature of the symbolic order to be legitimized. Within a 'sacred canopy', the illusive essence of cultural artifice - the fact of being a mere human projection - must, by assumption, be forgotten. What has been stamped out of the ground *ex nihilo* appears as the manifestation of something that has been existent from the beginning of time:

Let the people forget that this order was established by men and continues to be dependent upon the consent of men. Let them believe that in acting out the institutional programs that have been imposed upon them, they are but realizing the deepest aspirations of their own being and putting themselves in harmony with the fundamental order of the universe.⁴⁵

The sacred bestows upon human cultural constructions an ultimately valid ontological status. As the historian of religions Mircea Eliade reminds us, the work of man becomes the work of God by means of a mimesis with the 'world above'. A 'cosmicized' *nomos* is always a replica of the paradigmatic universe created and inhabited by God. Hence, it shares in the sanctity of God's world.⁴⁶ It is worth noting that a religious mind, conceiving the terrestrial world as a copy of the celestial, values human creativity to the degree that it is imitative, rather than freely original.⁴⁷

The symbolism implicit in the architecture of the Temple of Jerusalem offers a remarkable clarification about the process of cosmicization and its rationales. Within the Jewish religious tradition, not only architectonic criteria, but even the faintest detail of the Temple are believed to duplicate a transcendent model established, from most distant times, as the configuration of Heaven. For the people of Israel, the plans for the Temple buildings, of the tabernacle, and of the sacred utensils had been created by Yahweh himself who communicated them, face to face, to the most important prophet of Judaism, Moses, in order to be reproduced on earth: 'And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it' [Exodus, 25, 8-9]. King Solomon would fulfil the task building Yahweh, the master of the universe, a dwelling place which was an image of the universe.⁴⁸ The Christian basilica and, later on, cathedral took over and continued such an imitative pattern.⁴⁹ By virtue of this kingship, the microcosm of every sanctuary is perceived to reflect or manifest the structure of the macrocosm. If everything here below has its analogue up above, men can establish their sacred spaces as a

replica of the fundamental order of the universe - which may be eventually polluted, but never corrupted. The work of God, not being involved in time, stands *in aeternum*.⁵⁰

As a legitimizing agency religion may exert a remarkable centripetal force towards the maintenance of the status quo. A political authority may be seen as the agent of the world above, or, ideally, even as its divine incarnation. Human power, government, and chastisement thus become sacramental phenomena, channels by which divine forces are made to impinge upon individuals' lives. To obey would imply being in harmonious relationship with the universe. Once mundane structures of power are enhanced by mimesis with the divine, social and political upheavals against them are immediately perceived as threatening violations of the world above. By the same token, it is often by reference to the idea of the holy and its revelations that revolutionary breaches in the status quo are justified. Religion is the natural handmaiden of politics: for centuries, the two have been marching hand in hand, united by either conservative or regenerative ambitions.⁵¹

1.8 The sacred

The sacred represents a category of interpretation and evaluation peculiar to all religions. Durkheim's classic statement of the distinction between sacred and profane is that sacred things are those that the religious interdictions protect and isolate; profane things, those to which these interdictions are applied and which must remain *at distance* from the first.⁵² The sacred is thus considered to be extraordinary and set apart from every other experience. Its manifestations are apprehended as 'sticking out' from the normal routines of everyday life, as something potentially dangerous, though the danger can be domesticated and its potency harnessed to human needs.⁵³ Roger Caillois maintains that it is from the sacred that the religious believer expects all succour and success. The reverence in which they hold the sacred is composed equally of terror and confidence:

(...) in its basic forms, the sacred represents a dangerous force, incomprehensible, intractable but eminently efficacious. For the one who decides to have recourse to it, the problem consists of capturing and utilizing it in his best interests, while at the same time protecting himself against a force so difficult to control.⁵⁴

Almost all religions are concerned with principles of power that are regarded as being either creative or destructive, beneficial or dangerous. This distinctive

antinomy becomes evident if we refer to the concept of the sacred developed by the German theologian Rudolf Otto in 1917. According to his theory, the sacred is 'an ineffable spiritual experience' that cannot be understood rationally and occurs in the presence of the 'numinous'. Otto coined this term referring to 'the deepest and most fundamental element in all strong and sincerely felt religious emotions'.⁵⁵ The numinous manifests itself 'in strong and sudden ebullitions of personal piety, in the fixed and ordered solemnities of rites and liturgies', or 'in the atmosphere that clings to old religious monuments and buildings, to temples and to churches'. It may be a benign feeling 'sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with tranquil mood of gentle tide' or, by contrast, a violent force erupting from 'the depth of the soul with spasms and convulsions and leading to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy'.⁵⁶

The German theologian tried to encapsulate the distinctive features of the numinous by minting another Latin neologism: *mysterium tremendum*. Still today, this term remains one of the most evocative religious concepts. The *mysterium* component indicates a majestic and truly amazing entity who is perceived to be 'wholly other', that is to say totally outside the schemes of normal experience.⁵⁷ Moreover, endowed with the *mysterium*, there is also an element of fascination: an enthralling force enrapturing whoever experiences the numinous as a dependency on the 'absolute'. The *tremendum* component of the numinous comprises instead elements of awfulness, overpoweringness, and an immense and irrational vigour that 'engages man's sentiments, drives him to industrious fervour and fills with a boundless dynamic tension both in terms of asceticism and zealousness'.⁵⁸

Even though the sacred is understood as other than man, it yet refers to man, relating to him in a manner in which no other earthly phenomenon does. It is perceived as an immensely powerful reality that both transcends and includes man: it addresses itself to him and locates his life in an ultimately meaningful order. In other words, the sacred allows the religious man to live in a real sense, to be at the centre of the world.

1.9 The centre of the world

In almost all his studies of religious myths, symbols, and rituals, Eliade underscores that the experience of the sacred (and the techniques for its 'construction') follows spatial criteria. In a wide variety of religious cultures, a

sacred space is carved out *horizontally* by breaks affected in the homogeneity of the profane space. A territory is consecrated when a part of it is detached from the surrounding milieu and rendered 'qualitatively different' by means of what Eliade defines as a 'hierophany': an irruption of the sacred in the world.⁵⁹ By manifesting itself as a pure discontinuity, a hierophany 'founds the world' of a religious man, establishing its limits and order. But, above all, a hierophany reveals a *centre* into the formless fluidity of the profane space. This 'fixed point' projected into chaos represents an access to 'absolute reality', and the core of many religious experiences. The tendency to move around gravitational points is very old and can be observed even in non-human species like the chimpanzees⁶⁰, but it is only in the domain of the sacred that the centre acquires its deepest symbolic meaning. According to the schemes of countless cosmologies, it is from the centre that the entire universe came into being and developed.⁶¹

It is exactly there, at the 'midpoint' individuated by the sacred irruption, that the *axis mundi* - or 'pillar of the world' - is situated.⁶² The *axis mundi* performs its cosmological role *vertically* providing the religious individual and communities with a permanent channel of communication with the world above. That central axis would be the focal reference for all future orientations since it represents the way by which the divinity may descend to earth and man may symbolically ascend to heaven. For the sacred axis to be broken denotes catastrophe. It implies the end of the world, regression to formless chaos.⁶³

Once more, the Temple of Jerusalem - the holiest of the holy sites in ancient Judaism which, similar to many other temples, sanctuaries and churches, was believed to be at the navel of the earth - may be recalled as a paradigmatic example in order to elucidate the symbolism related to the centre. The door opening on the interior of the Temple marks two qualitatively different existential modes, the religious and the profane. That threshold possesses both a spatial and symbolic significance. It represents the *limen* distinguishing and opposing 'two worlds and, at the same time, the paradoxical place where those worlds communicate, where passage from the profane to the sacred order becomes possible'.⁶⁴ Although a first orientation may be achieved by simply entering the perimeter of the Temple, the furthest level of meaning is experienced by being in the proximity of the centre that holy precinct localises. There, the cosmic axis lies, assuring the religious man a 'way opened upward', a way which may be *ritually* utilized in order to communicate with the transcendental world of Yahweh. A religious Jew normally conceives his

‘meaningful space’ as spreading from that cosmic epicentre as a series of concentric circles: a sanctuary (the Temple of Jerusalem), a city (Jerusalem), and an entire country (the Holy Land). In other words, the Jewish sacred system develops from the centre of world.⁶⁵

The catastrophic experience of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in the civil war of 66-73 CE meant the loss of much, if not all, which was thought to be sacred in ancient Judaism. When a city-state like Jerusalem - the epicentre of the world and the place nearest to Heaven - was annihilated in battle, it was a whole universe that had been reduced to chaos.⁶⁶ It is partly in light of the symbolic relevance of that sacred centre, that the Messianic expectations for the re-building of Temple today feeding both Jewish and Christian Fundamentalists may be understood.⁶⁷ The sacred being the only experience that really matters, religious individuals want to live as close as possible to the centre. Life is not thinkable without being in the proximity of a gate to the transcendental order. In this sense, the maxim ‘extra ecclesia nulla salus’: to be excluded from the holy precinct, marginal to the cosmic axis, means to lose all the connections to what is truly meaningful and be swallowed up by the Maelstrom.

1.10 Really real

The polarities of the maxim ‘as above, so below’ may easily be reversed. The anthropological would be thereby valued over the ontological and the formula ‘so below, as above’ would suggest religion to be the furthest projection in the service of legitimizing human institutions and practices. Yet, the perspective of a sacred world as an *imago homini* rather than an *imago dei* would be rejected by the true believer finding no resonance in his mind. In the infinite varieties of religious experiences, there seems to be one crucial element of unity:

The sacred is equivalent to a *power*, and, in the last analysis, to *reality*. The sacred is saturated with being. Sacred power means reality and at the same time enduringness and efficacy. The polarity sacred and profane is often expressed as an opposition between *real* and *unreal*. Thus it is easy to understand that religious man deeply desires to *be*, to participate in *reality*, to be saturated with power.⁶⁸

The tendency to find an orientation in a religious discourse, set of practices, community or institution becomes perfectly understandable. It is only in such a world that a believer participates in *being*, that he has a *real existence*. The need for religion, maintains Eliade, expresses ‘an unquenchable ontological thirst

[for] absolute reality'.⁶⁹ To be within the sacred - at the very heart of the real, at the centre of the world, precisely closest to God - means to have an opportunity to assuage that kind of thirst.

Religious outlook differs from scientific, philosophical, artistic views in that it interprets the world's complexity through the lens of non-hypothetical truths. Rather than scepticism, doubt or analysis, its watchwords are acceptance, faith and commitment. The believer's mind rests on the same sense of the *really real* that religious discourse, practices, communities and institutions are 'devoted to producing, intensifying, and, so far as possible, rendering inviolable by the discordant revelation of secular experience'.⁷⁰ A religious man understands and relates to the sacred world only from the perspective of the really real. In this sense, a God revealed and explained through an interpretative lens other than the religious is not a God anymore.

1.11 The need to believe

Whenever men have grown accustomed to a precisely repeated and limited experience in their churches or temples they can no longer do without it. They need it as they need food and anything else which is part of their existence. No sudden suppression of their cult, no prohibition by edict of the state, can remain without consequences.⁷¹

A predisposition towards the transcendental is an essential characteristic not just of some individuals, but also of the whole human species. According to Gustave Le Bon, the concept of the sacred does not necessarily presuppose the existence of an extra-mundane divinity. The gods are figments of human imagination: 'it was undoubtedly man who created the gods, but he then became subjugated to them immediately after their creation'.⁷² Le Bon, who studied the psychology of the crowd, considered the religious impulse in whatever form it manifests itself to be the expression of an irrepressible human sentiment: 'the gods are not immortal, but the spirit of religion is eternal'.⁷³ He argued that the religious idea originates in the most peremptory of human instincts, namely the need to submit oneself to a divine, political or social faith. An individual is not religious solely when he worships a divinity, but 'when he puts all the resources of his mind, the complete submission of his will, at the service of a single cause which becomes the goal and guide of his thoughts and action'.⁷⁴ In 1912, the French sociologist Emile Durkheim elaborated a *functionalist* theory in which he considered the origin of any religious phenomenon to be a fundamentally spontaneous product of a united

community. The function of religion is to elevate people beyond themselves and have them live a superior life in the social group to which they belong. Durkheim maintained that the 'idea of the holy' does not require the presence of a supernatural being, because it is nothing more than the expression of the totality of the collective life. The individuals who constitute a community feel unified and maintain that unity for as long as they share a set of beliefs and practice the rituals required by those beliefs. In this sense, the divinity appears to be the society itself, and, therefore, the society venerates itself.⁷⁵

In increasingly secularizing societies, religious impulses have often been vilified or screened off from conscious awareness. However, once inhibited or repressed, the human need to believe does not disappear, but rather it transmutes in alternative and sometimes perverted forms. Following the decline of traditional faiths, the 'numinous sentiment' wanders in 'a state of freedom and purity' in the quest for 'new objects and terms' upon which fixing itself, just like 'a lightning wanders in search of a place in which discharging itself'.⁷⁶ In the aftermath of the Great War, the State, the Fatherland, the Nation, the Race, and the Class became the novel idols for the 'enthusiastic veneration' of the masses, whilst 'secular cults' such as Communism, Fascism and Nazism provided appealing ideals of intra-historical salvation. Despite their declared atheist or even anti-religious stand, last century political religions borrowed heavily from the mythic-ritual repertoire of traditional faiths in order to build and maintain their mass consent. According to Eliade, this would suggest that

non-religious man in the pure state is a comparatively rare phenomenon, even in the most desacralized of modern societies. The majority of the 'irreligious' still behave religiously, although unaware of the fact. (...) But the modern man who feels and claims that he is non-religious still retains a large stock of camouflaged myths and degenerated rituals. (...) Strictly speaking, the great majority of the irreligious are not liberated from religious behaviour, from theologies and mythologies.⁷⁷

The demise of 'established gods' never entails 'the disappearance of the experience of the sacred'. This will always be 'in search of new forms in which to embody itself'.⁷⁸ The intransigent views of 'evangelical atheists' such as Richard Dawkins or Daniel Dennett have been accordingly interpreted as 'shoddy replicas of Christian faith markedly more irrational than the original article'.⁷⁹ If atheism remains a contradiction in terms for it is basically defined by what it excludes, the ardent engagement and intellectual rigidity of some of its acolytes bear witness that religious impulses and needs might have been buried in the unconscious, but only to remerge in a grotesque and more

intolerant guise. The ideal of science at the service of humanity has also been categorized as one of the current 'objects of devotion': a pseudo-religion whose comforting dogmas can elevate people beyond themselves. If improvement in other domains or disciplines might appear fragmentary and reversible, the growth of scientific knowledge is often portrayed as cumulative and seemingly unstoppable. However, the claim of logical infallibility that scientific reasoning so confidently purports denotes in the first instance an anxious quest for existential answers. As John Gray puts it in his latest study, the providential faith in the miracles of science might be seen as another 'immortality project' designed to 'achieve the impossible' and deliver humans from death, in this case 'technologically'.⁸⁰

In short, all the attempts to 'disenchant' the world will not make the numinous experience disappear from it because people will always need to believe that a benign pattern can be glimpsed in the Maelstrom. The religious need has been and will always be a defining feature of humanity - a feature that, being encysted within our 'lack of true instincts', would require something like a mutation of species to be extinguished.⁸¹ With some exceptions, the current world is as 'furiously religious' as it ever was, and in many national or trans-national contexts more so than ever.⁸² The sacred, maintains Appleby, whilst hardly a novelty in global politics, has reappeared in force as a matter of primary concern:

The Shi'ite revolution in Iran (1978-1979) and the political awakening of the New Christian Right in the early eighties in the United States roughly coincided. Both events surprised journalists and politicians who bought in to a version of the secularization thesis and therefore underestimated or ignored the enduring power of religion to mobilize protest movements. The nineties saw the increasing prominence of Hamas (Sunni), Hezbollah (Shi'ite), and Gush Emunim (Jewish) in shaping the conflict in the Middle East, the electoral and cultural successes of militant Hindu nationalism in India, and the spread of Sunni Muslim radicalism, Al-Qaeda style, in parts of the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia.⁸³

Far from leading to its definitive decline, secularizing Modernity is undoubtedly provoking a powerful resurgence of the sacred in all its varieties and forms. By undermining the taken-for-granted certainties upon which people depend, Modernity raises intolerable existential anxieties that can find appeasement only in transcendental points of reference. In this sense, it is not surprising that the conservative, traditionalist or orthodox are the most rapidly growing religious denominations.⁸⁴ In particular, the Islamic, Evangelical, and Jewish traditions have originated 'Fundamentalist' movements or sub-cultures,

which are gaining momentum claiming to reject Modernity as the chief cause of a general moral decline. It is within these Abrahamitic faiths where the Apocalyptic myth of existential renewal flourishes today.

¹ Cf. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, Chicago: CUP, 1993, pp. 27-54.

² Cf. Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terror: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, Chicago: CUP, 2004, pp. 1-3.

³ Ibid. pp. 5-7.

⁴ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terror: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, op. cit., p. 111.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Arnold Gehlen, *Man: His Nature and Place in the World*, New York: CUP, 1988, p. 4.

⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

⁸ Ibid., p. 181.

⁹ Ibid., p. 328.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 48-50. The Gehlenian concept of 'world-openness' is developed in chapter II of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Penguin, 1967.

¹¹ Arnold Gehlen, *Man: His Nature and Place in the World*, op. cit., p. 328

¹² Ibid., p. 45-54.

¹³ Ibid., p. 329.

¹⁴ Edgar Allan Poe, *A Descent into the Maelstrom* in *The Complete Stories*, London: Everyman's Library, 1992, pp. 457-453.

¹⁵ Cf. chapter XIV of Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill, An Essay investigating the Origins of Human Knowledge and its Transmission through Myth*, Boston: Gambit, 1969.

¹⁶ Edgar Allan Poe, *A Descent into the Maelstrom*, op. cit., p. 469.

¹⁷ Norbert Elias, *Involvement and Detachment*, London: Basil Blackwell, 1987, p. 46.

¹⁸ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man, An Introduction to a Philosophy to Human Culture*, New Haven: YUP, 1944, p. 32.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁰ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume Three: The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, New Haven: YUP, p. 275-6.

²¹ Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Mortality and Immortality and Other Life Strategies*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, pp. 3-4.

²² Fredrick Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, available on line at <http://www.geocities.com/thenietzschechannel/tls.htm>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger, An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, London: Routledge, 2006, p. 117.

²⁵ Quoted in Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, New York: Simon Shuster, 1973, p. xvii.

²⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, London: Fontana Press, 1993, p. 46-50.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 216.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 93.

²⁹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, op. cit., p. 90.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 92-93.

³¹ Ibid., p. 46.

³² Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Cambridge: HUP, 1990, p. 287.

³³ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, London: Penguin, 1963, p. 13.

³⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, op. cit., p. 104.

³⁵ Fredrick Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, op. cit.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ernst Becker, *Birth and Death of Meaning: An Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Problem of Man*, New York: Free Press, 1971, p. 184.

³⁸ Cf. chapter I in Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy, Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York: Anchor Books, 1969.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁰ Cf. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, op. cit., pp. 110-134.

⁴¹ Cf. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 15-16.

⁴² Ibid., p. 21.

-
- ⁴³ Anomy is an Anglicization of Emile Durkheim's notion of *anomie* first developed in his *Suicide*, London: Free Press, 1951.
- ⁴⁴ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religions*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1959, pp. 367-388.
- ⁴⁵ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 33.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane, The Nature of Religions*, Orlando: Harcourt, 1959, p. 65.
- ⁴⁷ Cf. Jonathan Z. Smith in the introduction of Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return, Cosmos and History*, op. cit., p. xiii.
- ⁴⁸ For an excellent account of the symbolism of the Temple of Jerusalem, see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions*, London: Longman, 1951, pp. 312-329.
- ⁴⁹ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, op. cit., p. 17.
- ⁵⁰ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, op. cit., p. 60.
- ⁵¹ Cf. chapter I of Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, op. cit.
- ⁵² Cf. Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Oxford: OUP, 2005, pp. 25-47.
- ⁵³ Cf. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, op. cit., pp. 117-141.
- ⁵⁴ Roger Caillois, *Man and the Sacred*, Chicago: CUP, 2001, p. 23.
- ⁵⁵ Cf. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy, An Inquiry into the Irrational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, Oxford: OUP, 1950, pp. 1-12.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 25-31.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 12-23.
- ⁵⁹ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, op. cit., pp. 11-28 and 63-64.
- ⁶⁰ Cf. Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, New York: Farrar, 1973, p. 399.
- ⁶¹ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religions*, op. cit., p. 16.
- ⁶² Ibid., pp. 298-300.
- ⁶³ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, op. cit., pp. 42-47.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 25.
- ⁶⁵ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, op. cit., p. 43.
- ⁶⁶ Richard Fenn, *Dreams of Glory, The Sources of Apocalyptic Terror*, London: Ashgate, 2005, pp. 68-69.
- ⁶⁷ Cf. Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, New York: Free Press, 2000.
- ⁶⁸ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, op. cit., p. 12.
- ⁶⁹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, op. cit., pp. 62-65.
- ⁷⁰ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, op. cit., p. 112.
- ⁷¹ Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, op. cit., p. 25.
- ⁷² Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, London: Dodo Press, 2007, p. 60.
- ⁷³ Ibid., pp. 103-104.
- ⁷⁴ Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, op. cit., p. 41.
- ⁷⁵ Cf. John Gray, *Black Mass, Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia*, London: Penguin, 2007.
- ⁷⁶ Cf. Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, op. cit., p. 10.
- ⁷⁷ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, op. cit., pp. 203-5, and p. 209.
- ⁷⁸ Cf. John Gray, *The Immortalization Commission: Science and the Strange Quest to Cheat Death*, London: Allen Lane, 2011.
- ⁷⁹ Cf. John Gray, *Heresies, Against Progress and Other Illusions*, London: Granta, 2004, pp. 41-49.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 188.
- ⁸¹ Ibid.
- ⁸² Cf. Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God, The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, University Park: PSUP, 1994, pp. 1-13 and 191-204.
- ⁸³ R. Scott Appleby, 'Globalization, Religious Change and the Common Good', op. cit.
- ⁸⁴ Cf. chapter I in Peter Berger, *The De-secularization of the World, Resurgent Religions and World Politics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Chapter II: Meaning at the End

No matter how healthy one may feel, we have bodies that are pathetic to us. (...) The more we mature, the more we decline. In short order we become yellow and decay deep in the earth. Of course it is possible to picture or imagine what may happen after us. But no gaze is cast upwards without brushing death, which bleaches everything.¹

In the previous chapter, we maintained that, biologically speaking, man is an unfinished animal. He lacks a fully developed instinctual make-up determining, in response to external events, the course of his life. Having neither a specific ecological niche nor adequate defences against his full perception of the natural world, man had to give himself a second, cultural birth. The distinctive feature of human existence is the constant effort to find symbolic surrogates for animal instincts so as to establish a relief from the overly stimulating complexity of the world. By means of imagination and reason, stable patterns of order are carved out of a chaotic experience. In this sense, the sacred represents the loftiest frame of reference available to fence off one's existential anxieties. An idea of the absolute, permitting man to organize all the impressions that impinge upon him, serves the purpose of living. Religious mythology, paraphernalia and rituals legitimate so effectively since they attach the precarious reality of human life to the all-embracing fabric of meaning of the 'world above'. This kinship shields man against anomic terror since the sacred is always perceived and lived as transcending human contingency.

A sacred canopy, however, requires the constant effort of symbolic redefinition and maintenance. The solidity of its structure is endlessly put at risk by life's ever-present disordering forces. Death represents the most compelling of these forces since any argument against it can clearly never be won. The terror of our inevitable biological decay is 'the worm lurking at the core of our pretensions to happiness'.² On the one hand, the legitimacy of every religion hinges upon 'the credibility of the banners it puts in the hands of men as they stand before death, or more accurately, as they walk inevitably, towards it'.³ On the other, it could be argued that without consciousness of human finitude, there would be no sacred canopy. In this sense, the religious imagination grows out of the same existential dilemma it is supposed to address.

Death represents the radical and irrevocable defeat of human reason in light of its two contradictory features: death is *real*, but at the same time *unthinkable*. By virtue of his defining capacity of being 'self-reflexive', that is, to understand the nature of things as they are in themselves, man is bound to attain awareness

of his own mortality. Unlike the other animals, 'we not only know, but are aware of knowing' about the inescapability of our death. In this sense, the consciousness that sooner or later we will die shares in reality with objects. It cannot be forgotten, 'wished away by a sheer exertion of will'.⁴ Once learnt, the reality of our death may only be momentarily not remembered, with our mind diverting towards other concerns and impressions. But, at the same time, such a reality is also unthinkable, since it is utterly beyond the range of human symbolic, ordering faculties. Death may only be approached by proxy: for instance, by means of a sorrowful loss, which could eventually remind us of our inevitable mortality.⁵ This 'felt anticipation' can never be a direct experience. Death is not accessible to perception since it implies the state of cessation of all activities of the perceiving subject:

(...) The world-sustaining potency of thought would be unchallenged without the knowledge of death. *Cogito ergo sum*: we think, therefore, we can claim to exist. Our act of thinking is the one and only existence we cannot doubt, an existence by which all other certainties are to be measured. But, there is one thing that thought cannot grasp: its own non-existence. It cannot conceive of a time or place that does not contain it anymore. The thought that cannot be thought and thus may well escape scrutiny is the thought of non-existence of thought. Death is, after all, precisely the unthinkable: a state without thought; one we cannot visualize – even construe conceptually. But death is real, and we know it. The predicament the death reveals - an existence without thought - is radically frightening. A halt to our consciousness is the ultimate absurdity, while being at the same time the ultimate truth. Death reveals that truth and absurdity are one.⁶

As 'unimaginable nothing', death cannot be symbolically represented and, therefore, domesticated by human thought. It is real and, yet, it makes no sense: a contradiction in terms that humiliates our reason, putting at risk the imagined infallibility of the order built around us. Its scandal loudly announces that there are problems without remedies, and this represents the most offensive thought. All culture stems from a substantial ambivalence. On the one hand, if we were not conscious that our existence is nothing but 'a short-term loan from death', there hardly would be any human inventiveness. Awareness of our decay is the premise of cultural creativity as such, an ongoing effort to artificially recreate the durability that our biological existence, by itself, so sorely fails to provide. Culture, in this very sense, is 'a never stopping factory of permanence'.⁷ On the other, that effort can never be adequate to the assignment it is supposed to accomplish. Whatever meaning humanity compulsively produces out of its symbolic capacities is unlikely to be enough. It will always remain lamentably brittle and ineffective in character. Death, when it occurs, would silence it.⁸ In spite of the impossibility of mastering its idea, or, more precisely, because of it,

mankind will never stop elaborating symbolic subterfuges in order to assign death a definitive solution, to entrap it within a structure of meaning and keep it there.

Although from the standpoint of a non-believer it may represent a 'cultural artifice', the religious promise of a final redemption remains one of the most efficacious antidotes to the terror resulting from being aware of our biological finitude. That promise renders a condition of utter impossibility of meaningful life into the major source of life meaning: the eternal afterlife in the presence of God. The myths of salvation, renewal and rebirth form the 'Esperanto' of world religions, providing humankind with that spiritual nourishment stemming from a sense of possibility. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse, within restricted limits, the main ideas and themes distinguishing the Eschatological-Apocalyptic narrative: a peculiar 'religious fiction' offering a definitive explanation to the anomic phenomena of suffering, evil, and above all, death. If death proclaims that truth and absurdity are one, the Eschatological-Apocalyptic rhetoric reconciles that terrifying contradiction by convincing the believer that all afflictions carried by the passage of time are to be redeemed when the earthly creation comes to its fulfilment. That rhetoric enables the faithful to re-interpret any apparent calamity as a 'positive good' by viewing it as a part of a temporal progression towards a final consummation: a consummation ushering in an age of everlasting bliss and harmony in which 'there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying' [Rev 21: 1-5]. To investigate the Eschatological-Apocalyptic rhetoric as a persuasive 'immortality strategy' leads us inevitably into contact with the phenomenal experience of time.

2.2 A sharp-toothed ogre

So as to represent the phenomenal experience of time, two different and even contradictory concepts are often employed. Time may be experienced as a mere repetition of identical occurrences as moon cycles, seasons or 'red days' in a calendar. The second and worrisome understanding of time is about the irreversibility of its passage.⁹ In Greek mythology, one of primordial deities symbolizing the idea of time's irreversibility was the tyrannical *Kronos*, a titan known to the Romans as Saturn. In 1815, the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya portrayed *Kronos* in the guise of a sharp-toothed ogre devouring his own children.¹⁰ That image brings out the essence of what it means, and will always

mean, to be human: defenceless exposure to realities of chance, change, decay and death. Throughout the world, religious mythopoeia and dogmas are concerned with finding a solution to entropic time. The necessity to 'climb beyond' the limits of an ephemeral and unrepeatable life accounts for the tight link between man's experience of time and that of the sacred.¹¹

Ancient civilizations in the Near East and Orient understood time as being 'self-enclosed' in a circle. The world, or *cosmos*, was thought to unfold, returning perpetually upon itself by means of an infinite repetition of identical stages of creation, deterioration, destruction and re-creation:

...generation and decay develop in a circle or according to an indefinite succession of cycles, in the course of which the same reality is made, unmade and remade, in conformity with an immutable law. Nothing is created, nothing is lost. No event is unique, nothing is enacted but once. Every event which has been enacted, is enacted, and will be enacted again. Cosmic time is repetition and eternal return.¹²

The classic idea of time was meant to reflect the unchanging perfection of the universe: neither direction nor goal, but a rhythm shaped on astral movements and natural cycles. Without the existence of a significant relation of *before* and *after*, nothing 'absolutely new' could arise from the historical horizon. In the eternal succession of cycles, one event was hardly distinguishable from the other. Many argue that that temporal understanding devoid of significant points of reference accounts for the Greek inability to develop an authentic 'philosophy of history' - a term referring to a 'systematic interpretation of history in accordance with a principle by which events are unified and directed to an ultimate meaning'.¹³ A future without direction implied a simple rerun of the past: neither progress nor decline, but a recurring gain and loss. Human action and fate appeared to be regulated by the alternation between *hubris* and *nemesis*, a cosmic retributive law that time and again restored the equilibrium of forces.¹⁴ The rationality of the cosmos left no room for any hope in a divine providence. The human condition was not perceived as perfectible, but instead crushed by a tragic fate: 'all nations, cities, and authorities must, like men, meet their end'.¹⁵ In awareness of the mutability of fortune, the best course was to resign oneself with virile assent. Even Olympus's gods submitted to the inexorable laws of the universe.

Within that scheme, however, mankind could find relief from the 'burden of chronicity', by benefiting from the very patterns of recurrence, constancy and immutability. The passage of time - and all the unremitting suffering carried with it - could be momentarily abolished by the repetition of the 'cosmogony':

the act of creation of the whole universe charged with generative power and meaning. By ritually re-enacting the favourable circumstances of the beginning in which the forces of order triumphed over those of chaos, man was offered a chance of revitalization. That kind of renewal allowed man to be projected *in illo tempore*: the paradigmatic, mythical, and a-temporal moment in which all reality was created. To become contemporary with the work of God implied being granted a fresh start with all forces intact.¹⁶ Life's finitude and tragedies became sufferable as they were inserted in an overarching, consoling system in which birth follows death, just as death follows birth. Human fate resonated with a cosmic pattern in which every end was never definitive, but always *organically* connected with a brand new beginning. The traditional mind was able to neutralize the reality of the second aspect of time (irreversibility) by equating it with the first (repetition).¹⁷ Through eternal recurrences, mankind was periodically empowered by that sense of 'unlimited possibility' associated with the mood of being on the threshold of a 'just-born' world.

2.3 The *Eschaton*

Consciousness of history has its origin in Israel with the Exodus from Egypt. The Exodus is conceived of as a historical occurrence that constitutes an irreversible 'before' and 'after', because in this event a new spiritual truth is experienced that is superior to the truth of cosmological myth and that at the same time gives new meaning to the existence of the people of Israel: Yahweh, who led Israel from Egypt, is revealed as the God beyond the cosmos and the intra-cosmic world of the gods; thus, the Exodus from Egypt becomes, in the self-understanding of the people of Israel, the exodus from cosmological civilization, and Israel becomes a people that has a history in the presence of the transcendent God.¹⁸

It is commonly accepted, but not unanimously recognized, that the first and substantial rupture in the cyclical understanding of time occurred within the Hebrew religious tradition. The prophets Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel introduced a notion of temporality hitherto unknown to the surrounding Near Eastern civilisations: a view in which time no longer revolves in an endless sequence of circles, but flows linearly towards a future single ending.¹⁹ Much of the persuasive force of Eschatology, or 'Doctrine of the Last Things', resides in its holistic approach combining and providing an explanation to matters of ultimate significance: the nature of time, the destiny of humanity and the cosmos, the source of spiritual authority, and the significance of human suffering and evil.²⁰

Eschatology imposes a teleological structure upon man's experience of time suggesting that all that happens is designed for or directed towards a final end,

which gives reason to what existed before. In Eschatological terms, the meaning of the entire human history becomes fully intelligible only from the standpoint of its conclusion. It is not by a fortuitous coincidence that, from the prophetic tradition onwards, the terms 'end', 'goal', 'purpose', and 'meaning' can be used interchangeably in the Western lexicon:

History is meaningful only by indicating some transcendent purpose beyond actual facts. But, since history is a movement in time, the purpose is also a goal. ...To venture a statement about the meaning of historical events is possible only when their *telos* becomes apparent. When a historical movement has unfolded its consequences, we can reflect on its first appearance, in order to determine the meaning of the whole.... If we reflect on the whole course of history, imagining its beginning and anticipating its end, we think of its meaning in terms of its ultimate purpose. The claim that history has an ultimate meaning implies a final purpose or goal transcending the actual events.²¹

To regard meaning in terms of a future goal transcending present events represents a real break with the rationales of the Eternal Return. To the Greeks, historical occurrences had import and sense, but these were not interpreted in view of an expected fulfilment, comprehending and finalizing the whole course of time.²² An approach in which past and present are a meaningful preparation for the future was lived intensively by the Hebrew prophets in hope of a final redemption. In the prophetic books of the Torah, every instant appeared to be precious in so much as it was ordained by God's purposeful plan, beginning with the first breath of creation and terminating with deliverance in the Promised Land. History might have seemed a mix of drift and disaster, but it was unfolding under divine guidance. The prophets taught their followers 'to look forward with confidence to a time when, under God, they would be lord of a fertile, prosperous world, and when their enemies would be finally subdued, never to rise again'.²³ Past and present evil was to be regarded and endured in the light of the Kingdom of God: a futuristic order in which man would be fully integrated and free from oppression. By the Eschatological valorisation of time, Israelites learnt how to live and suffer in terms of tomorrow, fascinated by what does not yet exist.

2.4 The abolition of history

The cyclical understanding of time enabled the members of the traditional civilisations to regenerate themselves by a ritual re-enactment of the 'beginning'. To re-actualize the instant in which the cosmos was created implied the recovery of a pure existence, imbued with virgin possibilities. On

the threshold of each new birth, the celebrant was projected into an a-temporal, mythical dimension, benefiting from a momentary, but repeatable 'measure of eternity'. Through that renewal, the vicissitudes generated by the passage of time were transcended, but not definitively. It is worth noting that the Myth of Eternal Return was *a-historical* in character: without meaningful 'points of reference' in time, the archaic man lived in the 'continual present' of ritual re-enactments.²⁴

With Eschatology, man's regeneration is no longer accomplished by endless re-enactments of the cosmogony. The cycle in which beginnings follow endings is broken, unravelled into a delimited temporal duration. Periodic regenerations are replaced by a single, definitive renewal that will occur at the end of that duration. Suffering in time is tolerated in light of a redemptive plan that would extirpate it once and for all. Whereas the archaic man appears to be indifferent to historical time, the Hebrew is interwoven with it: events are 'situations in respect to Yahweh, and, as such, they acquire a religious value that nothing had previously been able to confer on them'.²⁵ Yet, the emphasis on the value of history appears to be only cursory, since all events are subordinated to an ultimate fulfilment, outside its course. What happens in time is part of a transition ushering in a final age in which 'time shall be no more'. The kind of regeneration pursued by Eschatology 'irrupts suddenly and puts an end to everything, slashing the fabric of time like a sword'.²⁶ In light of this conclusive anti-historicism, Hebrew resistance to death, decay and suffering turns out to be far more determined than that of the archaic mind. The terror of *Kronos* can be endured only because it is known that, one day or another, it will cease forever.²⁷

It is worth mentioning that both Judaism and Christianity maintain, within their doctrinal structure, the cyclical view of pagan civilizations, by combining the teleological, linear conception of time with that which governs their liturgical calendar, rites and ceremonies. Many examples may be quoted here to support the idea that, in these two Eschatological faiths, to 'commemorate' implies to repeat and re-actualize a primordial archetype and, as a result of that, to regenerate time. In Judaism, the Sabbath rest ritually re-enacts the 'the primordial gesture of the Lord, for it was on the seventh day of Creation that God rested from all his work which he had made' [Gen 2:2]. Further, the observance of the Passover remembers and transposes in the present the experience of the Egyptian bondage and that of the joyful deliverance by the hand of Yahweh. Similarly, the Christian liturgical year is organized upon 'a

periodic and real repetition of the Nativity, Passion, death, and Resurrection of Jesus, with all that this mystical drama implies for a Christian; that is, personal and cosmic regeneration through re-actualization *in concreto* of the birth, death, and resurrection of the Saviour'. In other words, 'history can be abolished, and consequently renewed, a number of times, before the final *Eschaton* is realized'.²⁸

2.5 The everlasting Covenant

The meaning of Jewish Eschatology becomes fully intelligible only when interpreted within the normative framework of the Covenant (*berith* in Hebrew). The first prophets were members of the 'Yahweh alone' tradition: a religious movement marked by a stern denunciation of Near Eastern polytheistic practices and by the insistence that Israelites should exclusively worship Yahweh, the patron divinity of Israel. From the time of the prophets onwards, Yahweh came to represent a 'Lord of History': an interventionist God ceaselessly acting in the historical plane with an intensity and purpose which were unknown to the previous religious traditions. This appears to be the case when the Hebrew divinity ruthlessly battles against Israel's foes, the polytheistic tribes of the land of Canaan. In some Biblical passages, these acquire the moral connotation of 'heathens', whose extermination is tantamount to the elimination of the forces of chaos.²⁹ The 'Yahweh alone' movement was the religious milieu out of which the first monotheist idea developed, an idea which cannot be dissociated from that inflexible *deal* binding God to His chosen:

At the heart of the scriptures is a deal, hard and clear. This is the Covenant between Yahweh and His people. The term covenant has such an extensive literature that one can easily miss the fact that it is simply a bargain. The details of his agreement shift over time, but the kernel does not. If Israel will be His people, Yahweh will be their God. This, though easily stated, is as profound commitment as any set of human beings can make. This is opposite of the Faustian deal, but it has one element in common with it. Whereas the Covenant is a collective, not an individual bargain, and it is with the Almighty rather than with the devil, it is identical in this regard: once you sign on it, you belong to him. The contract is Israel's enlistment in the divine army; it binds the entire nation and does so generation after generation from time unto eternity.³⁰

In its early formulation, the 'package deal' contained a set of basic promises, with no apparent condition attached.³¹ God would increase the number of Israelites and make them into a great nation, bless those who bless His Children, and perpetually extend the Covenantal rights to Abraham's descendants.³² Yet, the primary derivative of the bargain is that gift of grace,

represented by the everlasting possession of the Land of Israel – in Hebrew, *Eretz Israel*. This exclusive ‘territorial right’ is still perceived by many Orthodox Jews as ‘divinely endowed’:

God alone is Lord and possessor of all lands; He alone distributes land to peoples. This article of faith is epitomized by the highly authoritative commentary of Rashi to Genesis 1:1, in which he states: ‘should the nations of the world question the validity of Israel’s title to the Holy Land by saying: you are robbers in that you have overrun the territories of the seven peoples [that have occupied the Land previously], Israel can resort: the whole world is the Lord’s. He created it and gave it to whomsoever He saw fit. It was His will to give it to them [the Canaanite nations] and it was His will to take it away from them and give it us’. (...) The absolute perpetuity of the Biblical Covenant eliminates the possibility that God can relocate the Land permanently to any other people. No conquest could ever usurp Israel’s right. Just as all the vicissitudes of fortune that afflicted the Jews did not invalidate their chosenness for God’s Covenant, so too *Eretz Ysrael* remained irrevocably theirs, and their ultimate Messianic return to it was guaranteed. By the same token, since God had given the Land to the Jews as a trust, it followed that the Jews themselves had no right to give it up.³³

However, the Land of Promise, as every other sacred trust granted by the Covenant, is not to be considered an end in itself, but rather a means through which the Chosen can more effectively serve God’s design. The fulfilment of God’s covenantal promise - the deliverance of Diaspora Jews in the Holy Land as ‘a kingdom of priests, a holy nation’³⁴ - is seen as the necessary premise in order to hasten global salvation. The repossession of the Land, whose achievement is the natural outcome of the ultimate restoration to Zion, is viewed as a blessing through which Israel will be a blessing to all the families and people of the earth.³⁵ The myth of divine election entails being singled out from a multitude for a special task, and, therefore, to stand in an exclusive relationship with the deity. In light of their collective commitment, the Jewish people therefore become the ‘instrument’ through which Yahweh advances His plan about the future of the cosmos.³⁶ The covenantal doctrine harmonizes Israel’s election with Eschatological hope, and at the same time it harnesses universalism to particularism. The Jewish exile is rendered into ‘the exile of the world’, and the Jewish redemption into a cosmic redemption. On the fate of a few chosen hinges that of the whole creation.³⁷ This providentialist and all-encompassing understanding of history would later become one of cardinal traits of the Apocalyptic tradition.

Despite the injunction of circumcision and a vague caution to remain pure, the Abrahamitic Covenant is unanimously recognized as a straightforward and unconditional pact. There is as yet no clear set of positive rules, no ‘if-then’ casual relationship.³⁸ As the Deuteronomy Literature, between the 7th and the

first half of the 6th century bce, rendered the original *berith* into a coherent theology, the human contractors became immediately 'accountable' to their patron divinity in a variety of ways. With the renewal of the Covenant mediated by Moses at Mount Sinai (that act concluding the Egyptian Captivity and the Hebrew wanderings in the wilderness), some principles of conditionality for faithfulness are introduced.³⁹ That which was offered to Abraham as an outright gift is now to be understood as a conditional loan: Yahweh will continue to favour and bless His chosen, provided they obey His commandments and sacred law. To be entrusted as an exemplar instrument of global salvation, a path of righteousness needs to be followed. To be a holy nation means sharing in purity with God, and this purity must be safeguarded by observing a set of religious admonitions and prohibitions against different sources of pollution: sex, idolatry, 'unclean' food, blood, etc.⁴⁰ The pursuit of these statutes and rituals of purity is intended to set the religious identity of the chosen apart from that of Gentiles, marking at the same time the holiness of Israel.⁴¹ The transgression of the hallowed ordinances is considered a moral failure, which contravenes the perpetual agreement. With the Mosaic restatement of the Covenant, the communion between Israel and Yahweh acquires the emotional intensity of a marriage. The prophets repeatedly warn that God acts as a passionate and jealous husband. His love may acquire a resentful form, whenever the Chosen wander off the righteous path they assented to heed. In order to enforce the moral economy of the Covenant, not only is the Lord of History capable of suspending His favour, but also of rendering blessings into scourges. If the obligations are not honoured, the gift of the Land might be taken away, the Israelites would be dispersed amongst the nations, and the very heathens Yahweh helped to defeat in battle can be turned into the very agents carrying out Israel's chastisement.⁴² This does not imply that Yahweh's original entrustment is jeopardized, but that certain elements of the special relationship are granted with the understanding that they might be temporarily abrogated if Israel is found unfaithful.⁴³

As a belief-system, the Covenant produces two psychological outcomes, which both tend to consolidate the kinship with God and the sense of divine election. The conditional thinking at the heart of the holy bargain maintains that if the chosen 'walk in the statutes and keep the commandments'⁴⁴, their patron deity will provide them with virtues, power, and prosperity. But, in times of fortune, the if-then mode may be easily reversed: the possession of economic or military might can be claimed as evidence that one is morally right and divinely

entrusted.⁴⁵ At a deeper level of understanding, the conviction of having been appointed to implement a divine mandate may also be reconciled with an opposing reality of powerlessness and misfortune. If every disaster or moment of hardship is interpreted as a punishment inflicted for having fallen away from the Covenant, the magnitude of that suffering may be offered as a 'conclusive evidence' of Yahweh's (betrayed) love.⁴⁶ After God has visited woes on His chosen, but fallible people, these are demanded to repent humbly, pray and endorse a more righteous code of behaviour. Given the perpetuity of the deal and the universality of Israel's redemptive role, Yahweh would no doubt restore His original favour.⁴⁷

Both the Covenantal system and Eschatology were religious responses to a moment of permanent insecurity and political decline. A series of misfortunes, disappointments, and persecutions led to their articulation: the prophetic idea of having been called into being for a purpose for the world's history acquired momentum as Israel lost its status of nation-state - a status previously taken for granted.⁴⁸ It was the very absence of an acceptable meaning in historical happenings, which encouraged an anxious quest for a triumphant future. The religious need for an absolute certainty can arise only in an uncertain world. Comparable to the compass, the Covenantal promise of an ultimate restoration in the Land of the Fathers provided the Jewish people with a means of orientation in space. By pointing to the Messianic Age, Eschatology instead provided them with an orientation in time. The notion of the irreversibility of time - that is, the awareness that *Kronos* wastes everything away and devours its own creatures - was endorsed by the Hebrews, but endowed with a futuristic hope that was meant to neutralize once and for all the distress caused by it. Part of this hope concerns the fact of having been chosen in order to lead a redemptive plan solving the human condition of suffering, death and decay. With Hebrew theology, moments of hardship generated by the passage of time acquire an unprecedented weight in terms of theodicy. On the one hand, adversities have to be tolerated since they directly emanate from God's will; on the other, they become steps necessary to bring about a 'new heaven and a new earth' [Isaiah 65:17, 66:22]. Each event is to be seen within the greater, comprehensive pattern of salvation in which Israel plays a protagonist role. Suffering is no longer man's purposeless prerogative, as it was according to the Greek tragic sense. It turns out to be the basis of an unprecedented investment in the future. This hope in a fulfilment to be accomplished at the end of history was taken up and intensified by Christianity.

2.6 'Now already', but 'not yet'

As a new and not established religion, Christianity had to furnish 'proof of authenticity' by creating continuity with a suitable past. For this reason, the Fathers of the Church did not break with the pre-existing religious tradition and affirm the absolute novelty and originality of the Gospels. They rather situated them 'at the end of a long preceding development of Jewish history'.⁴⁹ The advantage of such a construed lineage between the Old and New Testament was twofold. On the one hand,

Christianity was enabled to represent itself as the oldest, most pristine of religions, having its sources and seeds in an age far predating the most ancient events narrated in the profane annals of the classical, Babylonian or Egyptian civilizations.

On the other,

the sacred literature of Israel provided the Christian apologists with the testimony they required in order to prove that the coming of Jesus had been foreshadowed, foreseen and prophesied in the past.⁵⁰

The second accomplishment appears to be contingent upon the plausibility of the first one: so as to press the Eschatological speculations of the Hebrews into the service of the Christian ones, and claim that what was promised to Israel found its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus, it was necessary to appropriate, as complementary, a sacred tradition stretching back to the assumed beginning of time, the creation of the world as recorded in Genesis. In his path-breaking study *Mimesis*, Erich Auerbach captured with remarkable prose what was really at stake when the entire Jewish tradition was turned into a succession of sacred figures and events prognosticating Christ's appearance, life and death:

If an occurrence like the sacrifice of Isaac is interpreted as prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ, so that in the former the latter is as it were announced and promised and the latter 'fulfils' the former, then a connection is established between two events which are linked neither temporally nor causally – a connection which is impossible to establish by reason in the horizontal dimension (if I may be permitted to use this term for a temporal extension). It can be established only if both occurrences are vertically linked to Divine Providence, which alone is able to devise such a plan of history and supply the key to its understanding. (...) The *here* and *now* is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is simultaneously something which has always been, and will be fulfilled in the future; and strictly, in the eyes of God, it is something eternal, something omni-temporal, something already consummated in the realm of fragmentary earthly events.⁵¹

Furthermore, by the pretention that the advent of Jesus was prepared and prefigured by the Torah, post-Apostolic Christendom was able to present itself as the new Covenantal recipient of those promises originally addressed to the

Hebrews, through Abraham and Moses. The Church came thus to symbolize the true 'light to the nations', taking over Israel's role in the working out of God's redemptive plan, completely and permanently.⁵² A milder but not substantially different variation of this 'replacement theology' consists in the idea of 'progressive revelation': God has been manifesting Himself gradually to the Israelites over a period of many centuries, yet Jesus represents the climax of that revelatory process. It goes without saying that according to this idea the fullest understanding of God's purposes would never have been attainable at the time of Abraham, Moses or David.⁵³

However, Christianity 'superseded' Judaism, harmonizing its hopes into a quite different Eschatological plot. Frank Kermode argues that the strength of that plot resides in its 'fictive character', which creates a concordance between beginning, middle and end. The Christian Scriptures follow a familiar narrative mode that

(...) begins at the beginning ('In the beginning...') and ends with a vision of the end ('Even so, come, Lord Jesus'); the first book is Genesis, the last Apocalypse. Ideally, it is a wholly concordant structure: the end is in harmony with the beginning, the middle with the beginning and end. The end, Apocalypse, is traditionally held to resume the whole structure, which it can only do by figures predictive of that part of it which has not been historically revealed.⁵⁴

According to Kermode, men are creatures rushing 'in between time' who, so as 'to make sense of their span, need fictive concords with origins and ends'.⁵⁵ The Bible provides believers with a remarkable paradigm to interpret and, thus, withstand the passage of time. By realizing a consonance between past, present, and future, the Bible puts into shape and perspective history's whole course: a straight line marks the march from the initial Fall to the final Redemption.

Following the Hebrew lore, Christianity's sacred plot becomes intelligible in light of its finalisation. It is from the privileged 'standpoint of the end' that man will be able to know the purpose God has conceived for him and all creation.⁵⁶ Yet, in spite of this emphasis on the *Eschaton*, the first point of reference of Christianity - the one holding its sense as a religion - stands within the limits of its sacred history, and not at its end. As already mentioned, the First Coming of Jesus is the moment in time in which God fully revealed Himself by incarnating in a man who lived and died *historically*. The events related to Christ's life - Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection - represent a catalyst so pregnant with meaning that, in light of it, all that precedes and follows is to be ordered and explained:

(...) the Greek mind was virtually unable to develop a philosophy of history, because it had no absolute centre or fixed point of reference by which to order and interpret historical events. Christianity possesses such a centre in the coming of Jesus. This concrete, datable event binds and unbinds the entire perspective of human history. It divides this history into two periods which at the same time it joins together: a preliminary period, ushered in by the Creation and the Fall, converging towards the First Coming, which it prepares and prophesies; and a second period, of restoration and accomplishment, leading to the Parousia, the Second Coming of Christ in glory. With Jesus history has taken decisive step, crossed an essential threshold.⁵⁷

Jesus represents the historical 'mid-point' from which the web of time can be woven backwards as well as forward. That central event not only organizes Christianity's 'time-reckoning', but also the different phases of its philosophy of history - which is at the same time a 'theology of history', since the path it draws through time converges on a universal salvation led by Christ as a saviour. The historical appearance of a single individual is endowed with cosmic relevance. The redemption of the entire world rests on episodes that occurred in Palestine two thousand years ago, among an insignificant group of Jews.

A difference, distinguishing the Hebrew eschatological orientation from the Christian one, reveals the implausibility of a shared 'Judeo-Christian tradition'.⁵⁸ The Jewish people's faith is based on a perseverant waiting and hope, because the key eschatological fulfilment, the Coming of their Messiah, still belongs in the future. Christian hope appears instead to be resting on the undeniable truth of an already accomplished fact. In this sense, in view of the First Coming of Jesus, Christianity becomes a 'partly realized' Eschatology. A preliminary fulfilment assures the believer about the certainty of its final outcome: 'the Kingdom of God is already at hand, and yet, as an end, still to come; the time is already fulfilled but not yet consummated'.⁵⁹ This radical tension between *now, already* and *not yet* is essential to interpret all history after Christ. The saviour came once, but He would come again in glory to redeem the world, and bring it to perfection. In the New Testament, one verse out of four deals with this very expectation. So as to illustrate the bearing of that temporal tension, the German theologian Oscar Cullmann used a metaphorical image relating the decisive battle in a war to the V-day, the final day of victory:

In the course of a war the decisive battle may have been fought long before the real end of the war. Only those who realise the decisiveness of the critical battle will also be certain that victory is from now on assured. The many will only believe it when the Victory Day is proclaimed. Thus, Calvary and the Resurrection, the decisive events in the history of salvation, assure the believer of the Day of the Lord in the ultimate future. On the level of both secular and sacred history the hope in the future is grounded in the faith in an actual event, which

has come to pass. ...The outcome of the crucial battle suggests that the end is already near, and yet it is still indefinitely remote, for one cannot safely foretell what exertions the enemy might be able to make to defer his final defeat.⁶⁰

In the believer's eyes, the most critical act of human redemption has already been fought and won in Christ. This hope has a foundation that is not shaken by the fact that the final defeat of the enemy may still require its time. Such an enemy is represented by all the evil still circulating in the world.

2.7 Defining the Apocalypse

Defining unequivocally the term 'Apocalypse' - and its related adjective 'Apocalyptic' - will always remain an inconclusive ambition. Current and past scholarly debate on the subject is distinguished by endless disagreement, lack of necessary clarification, and, most of all, terminological confusion. The absence of an accessible, unanimous, and synthetic definition should not come as a surprise, since, originally, the Apocalyptic represents 'but one thread in a complex theological tapestry derived from the Bible'.⁶¹ Having being deployed over the centuries with countless different imports, the Apocalypse comes to us as sounding all the echoes of that irreducible complexity. Only in common parlance, the word 'Apocalypse' has somewhat reached that 'unity of meaning', which biblical specialists are still striving for: it is instantly associated with doomsday scenarios, images of cosmic battle between good and evil or mankind's impending judgement and final annihilation.

Once interpreted from the standpoint of its etymology, the Apocalypse does not lay its primary emphasis on the cataclysmic circumstances leading to the end of the world, but rather on its revelatory essence and function. The Apocalypse is a divine message, 'over and above received tradition of human reasoning', which 'uncovers' or 'reveals' secrets and prophecies about the unfolding of future events.⁶² According a systematic definition put forward by the Biblical scholar John Collins, the first distinctive feature of such a message consists in its literary format. The Apocalypse would be

a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another supernatural world.⁶³

All Jewish and Christian Apocalypses purport to unveil to human beings, mostly through the mediation of a revered seer, a semi-mythic sage or a spiritual leader, secrets hitherto known only in heaven.⁶⁴ This 'hidden

information' invariably announces to men, in an exoteric and coded fashion, that their world stands on the brink of a total and final transformation.⁶⁵ It is worth underscoring that Eschatology and Apocalypse, despite being frequently deployed as interchangeable concepts, retain quite different meanings. The latter should be considered as a 'branch' or, more precisely, a 'qualifier' of the former. If Eschatology is concerned with the end of time and the final destiny of humankind, the Apocalypse goes a step forward, by stressing that such an end, however conceived, is imminent: humanity is living the last day of its present history and approaching a new and essentially different level of existence.⁶⁶ In the late Israelite and early Christian writings, Apocalyptic speculations about both human and cosmic future are characterized by a strong sense of periodization and determinism. History's unfolding is schematized into a sequence of aeons, and every single event in those aeons follows God's foreordained plan, even when that does not appear to be the case.⁶⁷ This genre thus maintains and re-invigorates that Eschatological precept, according to which history is not a play of blind contingencies, but rather a linear plot endowed with meaning. A supernatural agent fixed its unravelling, which is close to its final fruition.

In both classic and modern Biblical scholarship, there is a consensus of opinion that all the Apocalypses were compositions born out of a 'sense-making' crisis. Their primary purpose was that of offering the religious community an 'interpretative prism' to address the unsettling idea that the world was out of joint:

[Apocalypses] are intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation, by divine authority. [They] have been written for a group in crisis, if only because the entire Jewish and Christian people can be said to have been in crisis in all the period in question. The visionaries looked to another world, either in the heavens or in the Eschatological future, because this world was unsatisfactory.⁶⁸

As with any other style of religious writing or thought, the Apocalyptic has to be understood within its historical context. This genre grew, flourished, and acquired a coherent structure during Second Temple Judaism - a period demarcated, as *terminus a quo*, by the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem in the fifth century BCE and, as *terminus ad quem*, by its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE. During this age, a succession of oppressive rulers - Hellenistic, Hasmonean, and Roman - engendered suffering, anxiety and estrangement, and, at the same time, an impellent quest for new meaning and deliverance.⁶⁹ The Apocalyptic message assuaged those needs, enabling the Jewish

communities to resolve the contradiction between the foreign subjugation they were facing and the longings for national grandeur inscribed in their Covenantal status:

Precisely because they were so utterly certain of being the Chosen People, Jews tended to react to peril, oppression and hardship by fantasies of the total triumph and boundless prosperity which Yahweh, out of his omnipotence, would bestow upon his Elect in the fullness of time.⁷⁰

The chasm between reality and aspirations was bridged by the idea of a delay of vindication. God did not abandon the Jews. His intercession was not manifested in the present, but rather to be seen as deferred to an Eschatological consummation: 'the fullness of time'. The Apocalypse anticipates for the faithful a denouement in history, culminating in a divine intervention and judgement. In the last days, wrongs caused by the wicked in the world would be corrected and vindicated, both on an individual and as well as national scale. Hope in a future fulfilment and triumph represents the basic ingredient of every Apocalypse: a kind of hope that 'irrupts into the present from a God who is always ahead'.⁷¹

The Book of Ezekiel, a literary outcome of the Babylonian Diaspora, prefigures the return of the 'whole house of Israel' to the Promised Land and the annihilation of future invaders by the hand of Yahweh himself. In the famous vision of 'the army of dry bones' contained in Chapter 37, the assurance of Israel's final restoration and triumph over its foes is connected to that of resurrection – an event that, as it is supposed to take place at the climax of God's self-vindication, signals the end of the present world-order and the beginning of a new one. Experiences of suffering and persecution led Ezekiel's authors towards the conviction that Yahweh would not allow the faithful to perish, but would rather receive them in his everlasting Kingdom.⁷² The cryptic prophecies crowding Daniel - the first Apocalyptic text to be recognized as such – are parts of another attempt to re-contextualize, by an Eschatological postponement, the political and social unrest generated by the Seleucid-Hellenistic rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-165 bce), and by the revolt undertaken by Maccabaeen party so as to overthrow him.⁷³ The underlying purpose of Daniel remains that to encourage the Hebrew civil population and elites to withstand the test of time. By reading and interpreting the prophecies unfolding in Nebuchadnezzar's dream or those related to the four beasts coming out of a tumultuous sea, the believer may comprehend that the current foreign oppression is part of a historical continuum that is foreordained, its

course already inscribed in the 'heavenly book'.⁷⁴ That continuum deterministically leads to the epic victory of the chosen and holy ones: the 'Saints of the Most High' [Dan 7:18]. Akin to the previous imperial powers that have ruled over the Jews, the dominion of Antiochus is also doomed to crumble, leaving the ground to the righteous Kingdom of the Israelites. This, after the final victory over the heathens, shall never be destroyed nor pass onto another people [Dan 7:27]. By reprising Eschatological themes developed in Ezekiel, Daniel envisages a final judgement and afterlife: human beings, including the resurrected dead, would receive a reward or punishment according to their deeds. In a situation in which the perception of danger and loss is pervasive,

the Apocalyptic revelation reassures the reader that the threat is not ultimate, or rather that the ultimate threat is not death but eternal damnation in the hereafter. For one who believes this, there is no reason to break the law or to compromise one's religious commitment in any way. Life is lived with an eye to the Final Judgement, and the criteria for that judgment are of paramount importance.⁷⁵

Not only is the Book of Daniel deeply concerned with the end of the world, but also it is the only Jewish Apocalypse that actually attempts to calculate the number of days dividing the faithful from that ultimate event. The confidence that future occurrences might be foretold in advance depends on Daniel's division of the historical duration into a set number of periods or epochs. Through this timetable, the historical horizon can be scrutinized in search for the fulfilment of key prophetic signs announcing the last aeon before the End. Such a predictive framework has had enormous influence on Millenarian movements down to modern times.⁷⁶

After having acquired canonical status, Daniel became a point of departure for further developments. Divine intervention against the oppressive empires, calculus of the end, final victory of the righteous over the heathen, and salvation as a reward for present suffering are all insights and themes which would be later reprised in the accounts written by Jesus' followers.⁷⁷ Daniel no doubt represented a source of inspiration for John, the author of the Book of Revelation, by far the most famous of all Christian Apocalypses,⁷⁸ a text that has considerably influenced the entire Western thought and culture. In spite of the fact that many doubts are cast about its apostolic authorship, Revelation is more frequently cited than any other book in both Testaments.⁷⁹ With its language imbued with dense imagery, cryptic allusions, and complex End Time chronologies, Revelation challenged and enchanted scores of more or less

learned interpreters. Yet, its words sound more incisive for being so enigmatic. The final book of the Christian Scriptures represents 'a glassy pool in which expositors find mirrored their own interpretative preconceptions'.⁸⁰ Given the endless hermeneutical opportunities it offers, John's Apocalypse transfers full ownership to the readers, 'who can with impunity discover in its pages the message they themselves put there'. In this sense, the meaning of Revelation is 'almost uniquely identical with its various applications'.⁸¹

Revelation underscores the idea that the present situation does not make sense on its own, but rather needs information from the divine realm in order to be fully understood. Such information would solve the painful contradiction between God's just rule over creation, and the apparently unchecked dominance of evil in it.⁸² Once more, John's Apocalypse has to be understood in the light of the historical circumstances that gave it birth. It is an epic of Christian hope, 'the victory song' of a persecuted religious community. The book was written from a deeply anti-Roman point of view so as to strengthen faith and determination within the infant Church.⁸³ Just like the Jews, the first Christians suffered oppression and responded to it, 'by affirming ever more vigorously, to the world and to themselves, their belief in the imminence of the Messianic age in which their wrongs would be righted and their enemies cast down'.⁸⁴ However, Revelation, similarly to the Book of Daniel, deploys the imagery of holy war not to encourage open rebellion, but rather to advocate passive resistance during a time of trial.⁸⁵ From the opening statement about its nature and purpose, the book is centred on the figure of Jesus Christ.⁸⁶ The key difference detaching Revelation from previous Jewish Apocalyptic writings concerns the pivotal role given to the historical, earthly rooting of Jesus, more precisely to the redemptive meaning of His death upon the Cross. In light of that evidence, Revelation can both celebrate the victory over the forces of evil, which the Christian Messiah is believed to have already accomplished on every level, and envisage His return as the agent of God's judgement and rule. The 'theology of hope' that Revelation might have bestowed on the oppressed Church depends on the idea that Christ's martyrdom eventually progressed into His Resurrection, that is, the final triumph over death and His persecutors.⁸⁷ That act would be replicated on all the faithful at the end of time. The paradox that the Messiah portrayed as riding triumphant on a white horse in Revelation 5:5 is, just a verse later, the innocent Lamb that has been slain is only apparent: the idea of suffering enclosed in the latter image is the necessary precondition for attaining eternal life and vindication.⁸⁸

The predictions which the author of the Revelation was trying to convey to his fellow-Christians all proved mistaken. Not one of the events that were meant to occur came to pass. Nevertheless, the revelatory elation of the Apocalypse lived on: reinterpreted time and again to fit ever changing historical circumstances, John's writing would affect the perceptions of generations of believers. One of its key accomplishments consists in the ability to render a moment of hardship the premise for being optimistic about the future. However intended, its prophecies indicate that current suffering, meaninglessness, and upheavals are part of God's pre-defined plan, and they would be followed by a period in which old scores are settled and the righteous immeasurably compensated.

2.8 The Zoroastrian lore

A remarkable amount of scholarly research has been devoted to the quest for the historical and cultural roots of Apocalypticism. For most of the last century, the consensus of opinion was divided between those who interpreted the 'Apocalyptic genre' as a substantial borrowing from previous non-Hebrew sources belonging to the surrounding Middle Eastern cultures – in particular Persian Zoroastrianism; and those who, overstressing the uniqueness of the prophetic tradition, viewed this genre as springing up from a debate solely within Hebrew theology.⁸⁹ Being all too often vitiated by theological prejudices, these mutually exclusive hypotheses generated inconclusive, misdirecting and counterproductive intellectual results. Any given Apocalyptic doctrine merges allusions from a wide range of sources: it is a cumulative and syncretic experience, which precipitates old themes and programs into new interpretative frameworks, adapted to ever changing historical circumstances. The Apocalyptic upholds the old, yet, at the same time, asserts novelty. Its meaning must therefore be obtained not from the sources from which it draws, but from the manner in which these are combined.⁹⁰ In this sense, the Persian impact on Hebrew and Christian Eschatological speculations, whilst emphasized to a great extent in the past, cannot here be entirely dismissed. This appears to be the case especially with regards to the Manichean doctrine.

The Apocalyptic discourse is a chiaroscuro representation of reality in which every complexity is reduced into a bold contrast dividing a positive pole from a negative one.⁹¹ The basis of a thoroughly dualist theology was laid for the first time by the prophet Zoroaster between 1500 and 1200 bce. The Persian prophet

put forward the innovative idea of a cosmic confrontation between *Ahura Mazda*, a supreme personification of the principles of order, wisdom, and benevolence and his counterpart *Ahriman*, a dark force embodying the principles of chaos, falsehood, and wickedness. The former was viewed as the divine guardian of the cosmic order, whereas the latter as the 'great liar and deceiver', incessantly at work to turn that order into a noxious ruin.⁹² Zoroastrian doctrine stressed the absolute status of both forces, yet, on the other hand, it also implied the inferiority and contingency of the principle of darkness to that of light. Such an ambiguity however disappears in light of the Eschatological dynamism inherent in the dualist view. The clash between the twin principles was a progressive drama, deterministically moving towards a *dénouement* that would have transformed the current state of affairs.⁹³ The battle between God and Evil was taking place, yet it was contained within a 'limited time'. Its conclusion would have marked not only the end of the limited time and the beginning of an unlimited age of bliss, but also the definitive annihilation of *Ahriman*. The regeneration entailed the birth of a new world perpetually rid of chaos and corruption. Eternity was the result of a process of purification accomplished by a series of violent struggles against an Eschatological enemy. Pivotal to Zoroastrian religion was also the notion of free choice. Humankind was by no means a mere spectator in the violent clash between darkness and light. The destiny of every individual and that of the cosmos were interlocked concepts. Human beings could actively contribute in accelerating the overthrow of Evil, by taking the side upholding constructive and righteous values - that is, acting as 'allies' of *Ahura Mazda* in the world's process of purification. Salvation in the regenerated age to come depended on that sort of 'ethical achievement'.⁹⁴

Within the scheme of Iranian religious dualism, all the cosmogony was a trap put in place in order to move a concerted warfare against *Ahriman*, reduce it to nothingness, and allow *Ahura Mazda* to reign eternally uncontested.⁹⁵ By virtue of its finalisation, the binary confrontation was beneficial to only one of the two principles. Zoroaster introduced a religious mode in which all process, development and organization was generated through a dynamic and creative tension dividing two contraries. Such a tension was not unlimited, but meant to consume and annul itself, producing, at the end of a limited time, a state of 'homeostasis': a stable, not alterable state of equilibrium without oppositions. This idea of a final state of harmony would be appealing, in terms of theodicy, to both Hebrews and Christians, to solve one of key contradictions inherent to

their monotheism: the reconciliation of a vast and terrifying quantity of Evil in the world with the notion of an all-powerful and all-good single divinity.⁹⁶ Importing and adapting the scheme of Zoroastrian dualism, the Hebrew and Christian cosmos became a battleground in which God's unity and omnipotence were disputed, but only to be reaffirmed in their fullness, at the end of history.⁹⁷ The forces of evil are permitted to roam freely, but just until the Messiah comes to imprison them forever and establish the dawn of a new, purified order in which

(...) every imperfection will have been eliminated; a world where everyone will live forever in a peace that nothing could disturb; an eternity when history will have ceased and nothing more can happen; a changeless realm, over which the supreme God will reign with an authority which will be unchallenged for evermore.⁹⁸

A principle of absolute goodness cannot be easily brought forward without its antagonist 'double'. In any Eschatological plot leading to the final victory of order over chaos, an idea of radical evil always plays an important role. In the Hebrew and Christian Bible, this idea displays a remarkable ability to assume any shape or name: serpent, Devil, Demon, Satan, Belial, Beelzebub or Mephistopheles.⁹⁹ In the Christian Apocalyptic tradition, appellatives such as the Beast, the Dragon, the False Prophet or the Antichrist, although very different in origin and meaning, are often employed interchangeably so as to indicate Evil's chief emissary appearing in the last days of history to deceive mankind and lead a final, yet desperate rebellion against the forces of God.¹⁰⁰ The Antichrist, whose figure has captured the popular imagination since the earliest times, and still factors in modern Millenarianism, is a chameleonic category of radical Evil, which may either assume individual or corporate human personifications.¹⁰¹ In himself 'epitome of opposition', since his charisma, powers and identity mimic and counter those belonging to the End Time saviour, the Antichrist is the last obstacle between humanity and divine fulfilment - a sort of 'catalyst' of all evil and corruption accumulated by the passage of time, there, at the end of history, and on the threshold of a new age. The returning Messiah would have to encounter and purge his negative 'mirror image' so as to realize the fullness of God's reign on earth.¹⁰² Over the centuries, the thought of Antichrist's appearance has nonetheless triggered ambiguous reactions amongst believers: his false dominion's advent is meant to bring catastrophes and lead humanity astray, but as well signals that the Heavenly Kingdom vanquishing Evil once and for all is at hand. The Antichrist's rule is

part and parcel of that scheme of things known as 'the Apocalyptic syndrome', a scheme according to which the entire cosmos, before being rejuvenated, must necessarily relapse into the primeval chaos.¹⁰³ Just as heresy and turmoil seem about to triumph and embattle the righteous, God would move the sweep of history towards its *denouement*.

2.9 Birth Pangs

The Apocalyptic attitude towards the present world can lead to utter despair about man and his world. So bad is the state of the present age and so corrupt its inhabitants, that the Apocalyptic outlook cannot envisage history as the stage of perfecting of man and society. There arises the hope for a direct intervention of God to bring about a new order of existence. Despair about the present historical circumstances in which God's people find themselves, and the conviction that redemption can come only from and in the world beyond are usually cited as the characteristics of the contents of the Apocalyptic literature.¹⁰⁴

The hope for a new order of existence invariably arises from historical circumstances that seem not subject to improvement. Pessimism towards the current situation is thus another key feature of the Apocalyptic genre: redemption can come only from and in a dimension 'beyond', since the mundane sphere is bleak and irremediably corrupt. God's rule 'disrupts' and 'intrudes' into the unfolding events from outside, substantiating a caesura that separates two qualitatively different ages: the Messianic and the preceding one.¹⁰⁵ Yet, that caesura immediately disappears since, by encompassing it, the former annuls the latter. Within the Hebrew tradition, the devaluation and loss of history represents the major concept marking the passage from the prophetic to the Apocalyptic outlook. From the postexilic period onwards, the idea that the fulfilment of God's purpose can be achieved within the plane of history is gradually replaced by confidence in an imminent and supernatural intervention, which rather tears that plane into pieces.¹⁰⁶ Henry H. Rowley captured the spirit of that shift in paradigms and attitudes amongst the Hebrews with the following words:

The prophets foretold the future that should arise out of the present, while the Apocalypticists foretold the future that should break into the present. The Apocalypticists had little faith in the present to beget the future.¹⁰⁷

It cannot be sufficiently underscored that, in its origins and by its very essence, Apocalypticism represents a theory of catastrophe: a theory emphasizing the revolutionary, cataclysmic element in the transit from the present stage to the Messianic one. Before being dislodged and destroyed by

divine intervention, history is devalued to its lowest degree. The dreadful 'birth pangs' of the Messianic age are portrayed, through all sorts of graphic images, in almost every Jewish and Christian Apocalypse. The imminence of the end is signalled by a long list of devastating calamities such as planetary wars, upheavals, earthquakes, epidemics, famine, and socio-political breakdowns. In the visionary literature of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah, the Day of the Lord - the day on which all previous history ends, and God destroys the sinners and rewards the saved for their unjust suffering - is heralded by climatic events shaking the world at its foundations. It is written in Daniel that the distress of that day would exceed anything that has befallen Israel since it became a people: 'redemption will come after a terrible fall, when Jewry is at its lowest ebb'.¹⁰⁸ Emphasis on the terrible violence and afflictions accomplishing the miraculous transmutation of the world into a divine kingdom also imbue the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha writings (the Assumption of Moses, the Book of Enoch, Twelve Patriarchs, and Jubilees), Apocalyptic compositions constituting key points of reference for the Jewish readership of that time.¹⁰⁹ Further, to an equal degree, heresy, apostasy and the desecration of God's name are destined to engulf human society on the Apocalyptic eve. The kind of salvation that the Messiah brings about not only breaks out from the depth of material degradation and physical distress, but also from the pits of spiritual disintegration: especially within Judaism, the pervasiveness of sin represents another key harbinger of redemption. In the last days, the law of the Torah would be forgotten and despised to the point of subverting the moral order.¹¹⁰ Redemption's drumbeat springs forth from such despair that, to many rabbinic sages, it is preferable not to be around when the Davidic saviour comes.¹¹¹

Several passages of the Gospels reprise the logic that prior to the advent of the Messianic light, the power of darkness would grow. That is particularly evident in the self-contained Eschatological drama of Mark 13 - commonly known as the 'Little Apocalypse', and also considered as the last testament of Jesus before the Golgotha.¹¹² The prophecies climaxing with the 'abomination of desolation' [13:14] predict, amongst the woes and tribulations preceding the end, the desecration-destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, that is, the *axis mundi* of first century Palestine:

This little passage of Christian Apocalyptic makes some points very clearly. The permanence, solidity, finality of the Temple as the sign of the religious and political order is denied. Faithfulness will be very hard, for false Messiahs and false ideas will crowd around. The temptation to recognize the pretention of the oppressors, and live in peace in a world that is dominated by lies will be

compelling. Violence and wars will abound, along with vast natural catastrophes. These are not signs of the impotence or the absence of God, but they are the context in which God is working out his project for good. They are, paradoxically, signs of hope, the beginning of the birth pangs of the new order which God will establish.¹¹³

John's Revelation, like any other Apocalypse, envisages a 'quantum leap' from present deficiency to ultimate fulfilment. That leap necessarily demands 'the complete repudiation of history as it is, placing all human hope in a future whose realization can only be brought about by the destruction of the old order'.¹¹⁴ In its pure form, Apocalypticism, therefore, cancels out any possibility for an evolutionary philosophy of history: it opposes immanent gradualism and reform. Due to its inherent corruption and in sight of its impending demise, history cannot be the channel through which human perfectibility is progressively pursued and achieved.¹¹⁵

Countless commentators, however, forget or underestimate that the Apocalyptic myth is not merely annihilative, but also and foremost regenerative. The fixation on destruction is so obsessive since it mimics an equally obsessive longing for salvation. As 'negative reflection' of a lacking harmony, the End Time hysteria betrays a deeply religious desire to rescue that harmony out of the prevailing chaos.¹¹⁶ In this sense, Gershom Scholem argued in favour of a fundamentally Janus-faced nature of redemption: the Biblical Apocalypse consists, on the one hand, in destructiveness and, on the other, in the utopianism related to that 'new beginning' ushering in the Messianic fulfilment.¹¹⁷ This very idea of 'creative destruction' represents the 'revolutionary charge' Apocalypticism is laden with: the 'Messianic tongue', warned Scholem, being 'brimful of explosive material', constantly threatens to blow up the historical continuum. It is worth remembering that, according to the original formulation of the Apocalyptic doctrine, the detonation of the Messianic charge strictly depends on divine will, rather than human agency. It is God who decides to annihilate His creation so as to renew it.¹¹⁸

3.10 Origins is the goal

Redemption can be seen as an 'apokatastasis' or 'restitutio in pristinum statum': a final recovery of the supposedly lost harmony of the beginning.¹¹⁹ Apocalyptic Eschatology presses forward so as to renew the world. Yet, its visionary force is not merely futuristic, as it simultaneously points backwards, to the re-establishment of an original state of things which comes to be felt as ideal: 'the so-called Golden Age'. Although of a contradictory nature, both tendencies are deeply interwoven: the content of an idealized past delivers the utopian basis for humankind's future. Salvation is thus a return to a flawless and harmonious world, whose image lies both in the past and the future.¹²⁰ This correspondence is most succinctly captured by Karl Kraus's dictum 'origins is the goal'.¹²¹

That redemption brings back the harmony that had been lost is a central idea to Judaism, where the Messianic Age is nothing but an ultimate homecoming: a restoration in fullness to Zion, after the experience of utter deficiency represented by the exile.¹²² Redemption, so intended, remains a 'worldly' process, since it is meant to repeat, for the last time, the actual 'return journey' towards the Promised Land – a journey in which the Chosen already embarked twice: the first time coming out of the Egyptian bondage, the second, out of the Babylonian captivity. Like Adam and Eve, the tribes of Israel were given an Eden in the land promised by their everlasting Covenant, only to lose it as a result of their disobedience against God's will. However, the parallel between those two 'falls' from divine grace is drawn with a crucial difference: Adam and Eve lost Paradise, never to return, whereas Israel, guided by the Torah, would atone for its sin and eventually recover the original loss.¹²³ That emendation is fulfilled at the last stage of the redemptive process: the eternal *Sabbath*, in which time ends and God's rule commences, recapitulates the initial integrity and perfection of the Garden of Eden, as depicted in Genesis. After having been scattered among the nations, the just shall sit again under their own vine or fig tree, and there shall be none to make them afraid or suffer.¹²⁴ For the Jews, not only is salvation associated with the return and repossession of the Land of the Fathers, but also, and at a deeper level, with being 'included' in one's own sacred space. The symbolism of the Israelites' final ingathering stands in stark contrast with that of their Diaspora. The former entails the mystical experience of being 'centred' into a solid fabric of meaning and belonging, contained within a secure perimeter, in the proximities of the *axis mundi*. The latter,

instead, equates to being stranded in the wilderness: a life fully dominated by chaos, oppression, and fear.¹²⁵ That of exile is an existence in 'deferment', in which nothing concrete can be irrevocably accomplished by the unredeemed.¹²⁶

If, for traditional Judaism, Messianic expectations remain anchored to the natural and physical sphere, the Christian ones betray more 'otherworldly' sentiments and ideals. Jesus is a 'not of this earth' messenger, sent by His Heavenly Father so as to rescue corrupted souls and raise them up to the divine abode.¹²⁷ Christian redemption represents a pilgrimage towards a more spiritual abundance and plenitude, gifts which find their furthest expression only in the transcendental realm.¹²⁸ This notwithstanding, a similar equation between what was in the origins and what will take place at the end may also be observed in Christian Apocalypticism. Given that God the Creator and God the Redeemer are unmistakably the same agent, the correspondence *arché-eschaton* appears to have been prepared beforehand: what has already been willed and planned at the time of Genesis, will be finally redeemed, rectified and restored.¹²⁹ This re-creationist motif is particularly evident in various features of the Millenarian Kingdom, depicted in the Book of Revelation:

The heaven and the earth that God in the beginning had created He ends by recreating. Adam and Eve, who have fallen, are replaced by the Lamb and his redeemed Bride. The Paradise which has been lost recurs in an equivalent state which includes the Edenic properties of the 'river of water of life' and 'the tree of life'. Men and women shall in the end regain their original innocence and its attendant felicity, for 'there shall be no more course', hence 'no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying nor any more pain'.¹³⁰

Following a circuitous logic, both Hebrew and Christian Eschatology, rather than a linear trajectory, would draw 'one great detour to reach in the end the beginning'.¹³¹ However, in both traditions, the final recapitulation implies something more than the mere restoration of a lost Golden Age. Jewish Messianism, observes Scholem, does not look forward to a repetition of the same process, but to a restoration of the primeval harmony on a higher plane such as precludes all further disturbances:

The analogy of First Days and Last Days possesses living reality. But it does more than that. For already in the Messianic utopianism of Isaiah we find the Last Days conceived immeasurably more richly than any beginning. The condition of the world, wherein the earth will be full of knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea [Isa. 11:9], does not repeat anything that has ever been, but presents something new. The final reconstituted harmony does not at all correspond to any condition of things that ever existed even in Paradise, but at most to a plan contained in the Divine idea of creation (...). The Last Days realize a higher, richer, and more fulfilled condition than the First Days.¹³²

The same qualitative difference between First and Last Days may as well apply to Christian Eschatology, where the final state of perfection brought about by the Messianic Age surpasses that of the Garden of Eden. Theologically speaking, neither progression nor regression is expected beyond that point, only the stillness of eternity. Eternity, perfection and purity, prerogatives belonging only to God, are the final fruits of a three-stage redemptive process that initiated with the biblical myth of Paradise Lost. The Fall is recounted as something which took place. It refers to an initial degradation, a loss of the infinitively superior condition of unity with God, which was given during Creation. The Edenic perfection of the beginning was compromised by human decision to embrace evil or, better, not to resist its seductive power. Everything is concentrated in that single instant: the original act of disobedience to God determines, along with the transition from innocence to sin, man's exile into the domain of *Kronos*, his becoming mortal, impure, subject to historical time and all the suffering associated with it.¹³³ The current, mundane aeon is thus to be seen as 'a middle stage of disunity' in which the two principles of good and evil intermingle, struggling for the ultimate control of both human soul and the entire world. The trajectory towards the third and final stage - the return to the paradisiacal unity with God - is a sort of 'circular catharsis' - 'a movement from a unitary felicity, through self-alienation, sin, exile, and suffering, back to the original felicity'.¹³⁴ Mankind enters historical evil, falsehood and suffering so as to purge himself of them once and for all. It is in light of this purification that the harmonious unity achieved at the end exceeds that of the beginning. It has higher status since all intervening divisions and oppositions have been overcome, yet preserved in an organized form. Paradise *regained* is a no-longer-perfectible harmony, including not less than everything.¹³⁵ Under this suggestion, the poet John Milton declared mankind's 'fall into history' as a *felix culpa*: the first Eden was simply inherited, whereas the final Kingdom will have been earned.¹³⁶

That salvation may be equally attainable by gradual refinement into an absolute state of truth and purity contradicts the original revolutionary mood of Apocalypticism, or, better, represents its 'progressive' side. According to this conception, redemption is no longer the outcome of a catastrophic event slashing the fabric of time, but rather an immanent development within it: the whole of history cannot be abolished since, as St Augustine put it, it is a necessary 'interim' of probation and discrimination in which the 'genuine oil' must be separated from the 'dregs'.¹³⁷ That proves that the transition from the

flawed to the perfect state may also be accomplished avoiding the birth pangs of the Messiah. His appearance at the End of Days, rather than entirely depending on God's definitive intervention, would stand as a symbol for the completion of a process, a testimony that the world has been amended by human discernment between good and evil.¹³⁸ We shall see that that human commitment to a progressive improvement - a commitment oriented towards the self as well as the outside world - represents the 'ideological matrix' informing the postmillennial attitude towards history.

3.11 Where heaven meets earth

The first hope in a definitive deliverance by divine intervention was conceived during the Babylonian exile, that is, in a time of dire deficiency. By foretelling a miraculous rescue from a position of impotence and humiliation, Ezekiel and Second Isaiah aimed to demonstrate to the faithful and to the entire world, that God's power and favour were still unbroken. The Davidic Messiah, the 'royal shepherd' sent to reassemble 'Yahweh's flock', would lead the deportees' return from Babylon. That, according to the prophets, represents the first step in a greater ingathering from all over the places where the tribes of Israel were scattered. Yahweh would also make a 'waste of desolation' of the heathen nations, which have been hostile to the Chosen. Within Jewish Messianism, national and cosmic restorations are twin concepts. The final defeat of the oppressors is made to correspond to an ultimate victory over the forces of chaos. An act 'as wondrous as the original creation in Genesis' is deemed to purify the cosmos from all the impairing agents and, at the same time, inaugurate a new age in which Israel's sovereignty will continue unchallenged and unchallengeable forevermore.¹³⁹ In the Hebrew Bible, that final act is linked to a precise spatial location.

Unlike Christian Apocalypticism, which rather tends to emphasize its extra-mundane orientation, the terms of Jewish Messianism are firmly geographical: redemption is meant to be accomplished by entering and dwelling on that sacred space that was initially assigned to the Jewish people by the Covenant.¹⁴⁰ By a series of concentric circles, a clear connection develops between the Land, the City and the Temple of Jerusalem. In Judaism, there is a sort of 'metonymic contiguity' indissolubly linking these three physical entities: 'Jerusalem had come to symbolize all that the Land stood for, and just as Jerusalem became the symbol of the Land, so the Temple became the symbol of the City'.¹⁴¹ Final

salvation is accomplished by inclusion in that hallowed precinct organized around a centre. As the Land represents the place in which Yahweh dwells and manifests Himself more fully to the Israelites [Zech 8:3], sacredness is ascribed to 'every clog and grain on which feet can tread'. Actual physical localities, such as trees, stones, graves and walls, are considered as holy in themselves.¹⁴² 'Next year in Jerusalem' is the auspice inscribed in the Passover Seder: a ritual feast so integral to Jewish faith and identity, since it commemorates, along with the return to Zion, the ontological passage from slavery to freedom.¹⁴³ In that city, after the Lord's final triumph over Israel's enemies, the faithful will be resurrected and the reign of everlasting peace established. Yet, the ordering epicentre of the Jews' sacred space remains the Temple, the Holy of Holies containing the Ark of the Covenant.¹⁴⁴ According to an *Aggadah* (a homiletic and non-legalistic exegetical text) in the Babylonian Talmud, the Temple of Jerusalem is replete with cosmic relevance. It was originally erected on a foundation rock, a fixed point around which, at the beginning of time, God gave form to the entire earth.¹⁴⁵ As a source of divine power, the Temple was believed to withstand the subterranean waters which flowed below the surface surrounding the rock – those waters represented the forces of chaos constantly menacing to engulf the ordered world. The Temple was also perceived as a vertical bridge uniting the mundane to the transcendental, and the sacrificial rites performed in it as a means of maintaining and reinvigorating that essential correspondence.¹⁴⁶ Still today, a commonly held belief in Judaism identifies that sacred rock as the location where, with the coming of the Davidic Messiah, the final Third Temple will be rebuilt.¹⁴⁷

The Christian End Time scenario draws heavily from Hebrew symbolism. Apart from being a specific mountain near Jerusalem, the Temple Mount or the old fortress area of Jerusalem's City, the Land of Israel, the sacred space of resettling the Jewish peoples, and God's dwelling place, Zion is also recognized as the site where Jesus' Second Coming and the final transfiguration of the world will take place. Right there, Revelation's master plot climaxes:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things

new. (...) I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely (Rev 21: 1-5).

According to the most influential Christian Apocalyptic text, the earthly stage is meant to be replaced by 'a New Heaven and a New Earth', while a 'New Jerusalem' would descend 'from God out of heaven' to be married to the Lamb in an eternal union. By such a glorious regeneration, heaven and earth conflate together – harmony and perfection of the world above will be transposed to the world below sweeping away its flawed nature.¹⁴⁸ As the renovated centre of the universe, the Holy City not only becomes forever immune to the threats of chaos, but also a source irradiating salvation and eternal life upon the whole Christian community.¹⁴⁹ In this sense, Ernst Bloch regarded the New Jerusalem as representing the 'arch-utopian' archetype of Western thought.¹⁵⁰

3.12 Re-winning mankind

By definition, every renewal in a regenerated order requires the symbolic or physical end of the previous state of affairs. This appears to be the case in both the cyclical and linear outlook. According to the Myth of Eternal Return, fullness and purity are at the very beginning of each cycle, but such perfection is doomed to a progressive dissipation as the distance from the origin increases. Whatever endures in the domain of *Kronos* withers and, finally, disappears. Yet, this pessimism is tempered by the certainty that what has been compromised and destroyed can be recovered by the fullness of the following beginning. The cosmos relapses into its origin - the amorphous chaos out of which the first cosmogony took form, but only to be 're-created'. Within that cyclic understanding of time, humankind is therefore offered countless chances of regeneration – chances that can be seized by resonating with a cosmic pattern in which deterioration leads to renewal *ad infinitum*.¹⁵¹ Apocalypticism adopted such an archetype of perfection 'at the beginning', but introduced a crucial alteration in its structure. The end of the world would occur only once and the harmony raised from the ashes of the previous age would be no longer subject to further dissipation.¹⁵² The idea of a linear trajectory climaxing with an Apocalyptic catastrophe breaks the perpetual dynamism of the cyclic repetitions. The bearing of that halt imposed on cosmic cycles of time is eloquently described by Revelation 21: 23: 'And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it'.¹⁵³ No

more decadences leading to re-births periodically, but a unique and ultimate 'new beginning', ushering in a condition of rest in the immediate presence of God. That state of 'perfection in stillness' is a completely different order of existence, which excludes further changes so as to continue into timelessness without end.

Needless to say, given the rewards inscribed in its definitiveness, the Apocalyptic chance of renewal is far more enticing than the innumerable ones that are achievable within the scheme of the Eternal Return. Haunted by his in-built inadequacy, the not yet finished animal would be inherently prone to embrace that single opportunity of absolute fulfilment. Experiences of deprivation, meaninglessness, and in particular death are powerful motives for desiring a state in which these negative conditions no longer exist. What nature did not provide him, man longs for in his imaginative constructs. As an outpouring of the distinctively human symbolic activity, the Apocalyptic assuages that basic need for order. But, at a deeper level of understanding, it also provides a definitive sense of 'closure', granting the complete re-winning of man's ontological deficiency. However, that bid to attain permanently to an equilibrium that mankind never possessed demands the drastic demise of the existing state of affairs. According to the inner logic of Apocalyptic renewal, only the transition from the catastrophic ending to the last dawn of humanity acquires relevance. In light of its meaninglessness, all past and present history is lost in the 'darkness of disinterest'. By necessity, it must collapse between devalued temporal existence and transcendental fulfilment.¹⁵⁴

¹ Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, Stanford: SUP, 2000, p. 340 and p. 332.

² William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, London: Penguin, 1982, p. 279.

³ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 51.

⁴ Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Mortality, Immortality, and Other Life Strategies*, op. cit., p. 3-4.

⁵ Saint Augustine realizes 'the horror of living' a finite life while mourning the loss of a beloved friend: 'I had a horror of living because I did not want to live as half being, and perhaps that was why I feared to die, because I did not want him, whom I had loved so much, to die wholly and completely'. St Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, Oxford: OUP, 1998, Book IV, p. 76.

⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, *Mortality, Immortality*, op. cit., p. 14.

⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

⁸ Ibid., p. 18-24.

⁹ For an analysis of the dualistic scheme of human time see 'Two Essays concerning the Symbolic Representation of Time' in Edmund Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, London: Athlone Press, 1971, pp.30-53.

¹⁰ The image of the devouring Kronos as a poignant metaphor to explain the concept of irreversibility of time is entirely borrowed from Roger Griffin's seminal study *Modernism and Fascism, The Sense of Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, op. cit., pp. 80-85.

¹¹ Ibid.

- ¹² Henri-Charles Peuch, 'Gnosis and Time' in Joseph Campbell (ed.), *Man and Time, Papers from the Eranos Yearbook*, Princeton: PUP, 1971, p. 40.
- ¹³ Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History, The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*, Chicago: CUP, 1949, p. 1.
- ¹⁴ For a length discussion of the meaning and implications of the categories of hubris and nemesis in ancient Greek thought see Nick Fisher, *Hybris: a Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece*, Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1992.
- ¹⁵ Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History*, op. cit., p. 8.
- ¹⁶ For a treatment of the idea of regeneration through a return to the time of the origins see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, op. cit., pp. 80-113.
- ¹⁷ Edmund Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, op. cit., p.125.
- ¹⁸ Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, Columbia: UMP, 2000, p. 71.
- ¹⁹ According to Eliade, the crucial innovation introduced by Hebrew eschatology consists in having abandoned the circular time of the 'Myth of Eternal Return' in favour of linear and irreversible time oriented towards a final consummation. See Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, San Francisco: Harper and Collins, 1963, pp. 65-7.
- ²⁰ Stephen O'Leary, *Apocalypse, A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, Oxford: OUP, 1994, p. 196. From an eminently theological-normative perspective, Eschatology refers to the four 'Last Things' concerning the experience of faith of believers: Death, Judgement, Hell and Heaven. In this light, the 'looking forward' of Hebrew prophets might not be definable as 'Eschatological' since it is not clearly and coherently organized around these four major End Time topoi. However, it is undeniable that the Hebrew prophetic tradition is that area of thought from which Eschatology is an almost necessary development. Cf. John M. Court, *Approaching the Apocalypse, A Short History of Christian Millenarianism*, London: Tauris, 2008, pp. 29-32.
- ²¹ Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History*, op. cit., p. 18.
- ²² Cf. Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia, Background of the Idea of Progress*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1949, pp.4-7.
- ²³ Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come, The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith*, Yale: YUP, 1999, p.153.
- ²⁴ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of Eternal Return*, op. cit., pp. 49-73.
- ²⁵ Ibid p.104.
- ²⁶ Gerardus Van Der Leeuw, 'Primordial Time and Final Time' in Joseph Campbell (ed.), *Man and Time*, op. cit., pp. 338.
- ²⁷ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of Eternal Return*, op. cit., p. 111.
- ²⁸ Cf. Ibid. p.130. See also Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, New York: CUP, 1992, pp. 135-142.
- ²⁹ Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., p. 146. See also Peter Partner, *God of Battles, Holy Wars of Christianity and Islam*, London: Harper and Collins, 1997, pp. 1-13.
- ³⁰ Donald Harman Akenson, *God's Peoples, Covenant and Land in South Africa, Israel, and Ulster*, London: Cornell University Press, 1992, p. 13.
- ³¹ The Biblical history of the Hebrews consists of a series of Covenantal agreements made by God with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and David. Each of them is somewhat followed by transgression resulting in periods of exile and disgrace, which eventually lead, along with some sort of human atonement and divine forgiveness, to the stipulation of a new deal between God and the Jews. For a historical, philosophical, and theological reflection on the doctrine of the Covenant see especially David Novak, *The Election of Israel, The Idea of the Chosen People*, Cambridge: CUP, 1995.
- ³² See Genesis 12: 1, 12: 12-13, and 17: 4-8.
- ³³ Gideon Shimon, *The Zionist Ideology*, London: Brandeis University Press, 1995, p. 334.
- ³⁴ Exodus, 19: 4-6.
- ³⁵ Cf. Genesis 12: 1-3.
- ³⁶ Cf. Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen People, Sacred Sources of National Identity*, Oxford: OUP, 2003, p. 49.
- ³⁷ Cf. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, New York: Schocken Books, 1995, p. 43.
- ³⁸ Cf. Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen People, Sacred Sources of National Identity*, op. cit., p. 53.
- ³⁹ As recounted in Exodus, the very substance of covenant-making at Sinai is no longer a mere gift of grace, but conditionally dependent on the Ten Commandments: 'And Moses went up to God and Yahweh called to him out of the mountain, saying, 'Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and tell the people of Israel: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself. Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation". These are the words you shall speak to the children of Israel. Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all the words which Yahweh had commanded him. And the people answered together and said, "All that Yahweh has spoken we will do' [Ex 19:3-8].

⁴⁰ See especially the note prohibitions of Leviticus 18: 9-19, 18:28, 20:18, and 26:1-45; but also Deuteronomy 11:10-12, 13:1-18, 18:9-22, 20:18, 27:15-26, and 28:1-68.

⁴¹ For a comprehensive treatment of the ideas of purity and pollution in the Old Testament see the first chapter of Barrington Moore, *Moral Purity and Persecution in History*, Princeton: PUP, 2000.

⁴² Cf. Deuteronomy 4:25-27; 2 Kings 17:5-8, 18; and Jeremiah 9:13-16, 12:7-11. In the light of the twin concepts of election and covenantal duties, the Babylonian empire, which militarily defeated Israel destroying the Temple of Jerusalem in 586 bce, was perceived as Yahweh's agent to punish the chosen people for their unrighteous behaviour. Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., pp. 143-4.

⁴³ It appears that whilst the initial concession of Land remains an unconditional promise granted by the Covenant, its possession is conditional, since contingent upon the Israelites' obedience to the God who gave the Land to them. This matter is however subject to an endless theological debate within Judaism.

⁴⁴ Leviticus, 26:3:5.

⁴⁵ Cf. Donald Harman Akenson, *God's Peoples*, op. cit., pp. 16-7.

⁴⁶ Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., p. 148.

⁴⁷ Cf. Deuteronomy 30: 1-5. The idea that genuine repentance is conducive to the full restoration of Covenantal rights (particularly, the Land) is evident in the prophetic language of the first Isaiah (Chapters 1-39); Jeremiah (16: 14-15, 29:10-14); and Ezekiel 11:14, 16-18.

⁴⁸ Cf. Theodore Olson, *Millennialism, Utopianism, and Progress*, Toronto: UTP, 1982, pp. 18-35.

⁴⁹ Henri-Charles Puech, *Gnosis and Time*, op. cit., pp. 50-1.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis, The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Princeton: PUP, 1953, pp. 73-74.

⁵² For an extensive treatment of Replacement Theology see Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church, The Origins and Effects of Replacement Theology*, London: Paternoster, 2004, pp. 29-33, pp. 66-72, pp. 169-73; and Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide, The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, Minneapolis: Seabury, 1974, Chapter II and III. Consistent with this line of thought, Israel is seen by the New Testament writers as a sort of pre-incarnation of the Church and the physical Israelites as nothing but the its visible signs. Further, Jesus, the Israelite par excellence, is often named as 'Second Adam' or 'New Joshua'.

⁵³ Cf. Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine*, Oxford: Lion, 2002, pp. 132-34.

⁵⁴ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending, Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue*, Oxford: OUP, 2000, pp. 12-3.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Cf. D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic, Ancient and Modern*, London: SCM Press, 1978, pp. 28-32.

⁵⁷ Henri-Charles Puech, *Gnosis and Time*, op. cit., p. 48.

⁵⁸ Cf. Arthur Cohen, *The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition*, New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

⁵⁹ Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History*, op. cit., p. 188.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ James H. Morrehead, 'Searching for the Millennium in America', *Princeton Seminar Bulletin*, n. 8, 1987, p. 27.

⁶² Apocalypse derives from the Greek term 'apokalypsis', which means 'a disclosure', 'a revealing of something', or simply 'a revelation'. Cf. John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination, An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998, pp. 42-43.

⁶³ John J. Collins (ed.), *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre, Semeia 14*, Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979, p.9. This 'collaborative definition', usually abbreviated to *Semeia 14*, was the outcome of the Society of Biblical Literature's commission to systematically analyze the Apocalyptic literature of both Jewish and Christian origins. According to such definition, the Apocalypse would primarily be a text: a kind of designation of a genre under which other religious and spiritual texts having similar content and comparable formal and stylistic features are supposed to be gathered. Collins further distinguishes between two typologies: the historical Apocalypse, focusing on the mediated revealing of the last events before the End; and the heavenly Apocalypse, a more mystically oriented composition, primarily focused on an otherworldly journey, in which a seer discovers the ultimate secrets of the universe. Cf. John J. Collins, 'From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End' in John J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Volume I, The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, London: Continuum, 1999, pp. 146-47. The noun 'Apocalypse', here intended as qualifier of a particular genre of religious literature, is often mentioned along and confused with two other terms: 'Apocalypticism' (another noun) and 'Apocalyptic' - an adjective, which may also be deployed as a noun. Even on these last two terms, Biblical scholars grappled for some kind of clarity and consensus, but with little success. Both John Collins and Bernard McGinn understand Apocalypticism as a religious ideology and/or the social construct that lies behind

a given Apocalypse. Larry Kreitzer argues that Apocalypticism is the 'social ideology' driving a religious movement imbued with End Time expectations. Julius Scott describes Apocalyptic not only as the type of genre a given religious writing falls into, but also as a particular way of viewing life. Klaus Koch defines Apocalyptic in broad terms as 'a certain kind of religious speculation about the future of man and the world'. See John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, op. cit., p.13; Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End, Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, Columbia: CUP, 1998, pp. 1-28; Larry J. Kreitzer, 'Apocalyptic, Apocalypticism' in Ralph Martin and Peter Davids (ed.), *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997, pp. 58-59; J. Julius Scott, *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000, p.182; Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, London: SCM Press, 1972, p. 20.

⁶⁴ 'The unveiling of the counsels of God directly to the Apocalyptic seer and thence to his readers meant that the latter were being offered an answer directly from the mouth of God himself, apparently without any risk of contradiction. Here was the authoritative pronouncement, which claimed to solve the inconclusive debate of man about his world and destiny. (...) God reveals his mysteries directly to man and thereby gives them knowledge of the true nature of reality so that they may organize their lives accordingly'. Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven, A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*, New York: Crossroad, 1982, p. 11.

⁶⁵ Cf. John J. Collins, 'Eschatological Dynamics and Utopian Ideals in Early Judaism' in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imagining the End, Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, London: Tauris, 2002, pp.69-90.

⁶⁶ According to McGinn, 'Apocalyptic Eschatology' is that particular Eschatological outlook characteristically marked by a form of 'psychological imminence': 'a conviction of the imminence of the End, a strong sense that time is short. The apocalyptic author addresses his audience within a temporal framework that calls and confirms decisions made in light of the approaching End of history'. Cf. Bernard McGinn, 'Early Apocalypticism: The Ongoing Debate' in C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (ed.), *The Apocalypse, In English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, Manchester: MUP, 1994, p. 11.

⁶⁷ Some classifications tend to be more descriptive, singling out a set of features that seem to recur constantly in various Apocalyptic compositions. For instance, both Leon Morris and Klaus Koch put forward a list of respectively thirteen and eight characteristics of the Apocalyptic genre. Sense of imminence, determinism, and historical periodization are motifs featuring in both lists. Sometimes, providing a summary of salient characteristics seems to be the best way to resolve or avoid the difficulties in setting out a comprehensive definition of the Apocalyptic. Cf. Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, op. cit., pp. 28-35; Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic*, London: InterVarsity Press, 1972, pp. 34-67.

⁶⁸ Cf. John J. Collins, 'From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End' in John J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Volume I, The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, op. cit., p. 158. Kreitzer defines Apocalypticism as 'a social movement that arises out of a context of persecution in which a minority group within society feels alienated and seeks to express their hopes for the future in terms of an alternative symbolic universe'. Larry J. Kreitzer, 'Apocalyptic, Apocalypticism' in Ralph Martin and Peter Davids (ed.), *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

⁶⁹ For a general study on the historical phase in question see Larry Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

⁷⁰ Cf. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of Millennium, Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, London: Pimlico, 2004, pp. 19-20. Morris convincingly captures the idea that the Apocalyptic was a response to a desperate need for revelation arising from the collapse of the received theological frame of reference: 'Apocalyptic was indeed called forth by the circumstances of the day. But it should not be understood in opportunistic terms, or in terms of worldly wisdom or of fanatical piety. It was 'the response of faith', responding to the times, but also reacting in its turn on the times, for it built up faith in God's people. It was scarcely possible apart from the unusual times and circumstances in which it arose. This combination of circumstances brought about a new situation in which the new type of writing could flourish. It was directed mainly to a people in trouble, people who saw themselves as God's own, but who were puzzled by the plight in which they found themselves. The Apocalyptists sought to justify God's ways to men and to give courage and confidence to God's people. They put meaning into life for confused and troubled men'. Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic*, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

⁷¹ Orlando E. Costas, *The Church and its Mission*, Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1974, p.261.

⁷² Cf. John Jarick, 'Questioning Sheol' in Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David Tombs (ed.), *Resurrection*, London: Continuum, 1999, p. 31. D. S. Russell argues that, at this stage, amongst the Hebrews there is still a 'fluidity of belief' concerning the survival beyond death in the form of resurrection: 'there is no consistency in the identification of those who will survive death. Sometimes it is a religious elite from among the faithful Jews; at other times it is the

righteous Israelites, at other times again it is the righteous at such, be they Jew or Gentile. Sometimes the wicked are obliterated; at other times, through resurrection or otherwise, they are made to suffer for their sins'. D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic, Ancient and Modern*, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 10-16

⁷⁴ Cf. John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination, An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, pp. 92-101.

⁷⁵ John J. Collins, 'Eschatological Dynamics and Utopian Ideals in Early Judaism' in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imagining the End*, p. 75.

⁷⁶ See especially Richard Landes, 'Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled' in Werner Verbeke (ed.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, Louvain: LUP, 1988 and Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More, Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, Harvard: HUP, 2000, pp. 26-33.

⁷⁷ Theodore Olson intends the Book of Daniel as the foundation of Christian Apocalypticism and Millenarianism in *Millennialism, Utopianism, and Progress*, op. cit., p. 51 and p. 56. See also Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven, A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 11-13.

⁷⁸ A part from John's Revelation, there are several other relevant Apocalyptic passages in the New Testament. For instance, the so-called 'Little Apocalypse' in Mark 13 depicts the climatic destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem followed by the advent of the Messianic age. Its thematic elements are reprised, with further developments, in Luke 21: 7-36. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:11 focuses on the ideas of resurrection from the dead and the Second Coming – it is worth mentioning that, according to some Evangelical denominations, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 represented the primary text of reference for the elaboration of the Heavenly Rapture doctrine. Finally, 2 Thessalonians 2: 1-12 is traditionally recognized as the key Biblical reference for the idea of predestination, given the rigid distinction between 'those who are perishing' (2:10) and 'the first fruits for salvation' (2:13).

⁷⁹ Cf. Adela Yarbo Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis, The Power of the Apocalypse*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984, chapter I. Cohn maintains that the apostolic authorship of the Book of Revelation is almost certainly false: 'The work was probably composed towards the end of the reign of the emperor Domitian, around 95-96 AD. The author was clearly a Christian of Jewish and Palestinian origin. He calls himself John, and traditionally has been identified with the apostle John, son of Zebedee. This attribution, which has been accepted by various first and second-century Fathers of the Church, was partly responsible for the inclusion of the Revelation in the New Testament canon, and even today is defended by some scholars'. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and The World to Come*, op. cit., p. 212.

⁸⁰ Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, op. cit., p.42

⁸¹ Bernard McGinn, 'Revelation' in Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, *Literary Guide to the Bible*, Harvard: HUP, 1990, p.523.

⁸² Cf. Richard Bauckman, 'Revelation', in John Barton and John Muddiman (ed.), *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 1287-88.

⁸³ Cf. Adela Yarbo Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis, The Power of the Apocalypse*, op. cit., chapter III and IV.

⁸⁴ Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of Millennium*, op. cit., p. 24.

⁸⁵ Cf. Adela Yarbo Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis, The Power of the Apocalypse*, op. cit., pp. 156-159 and pp. 171-172.

⁸⁶ 'The Book of Revelation opens with a statement of its nature and purpose. God has revealed to Jesus what must shortly happen, at "the hour of fulfilment". Jesus in turn has conveyed the revelation to "his servant John", who now comes forward as a prophet, charged with the task of passing on the message to the Church'. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and The World to Come*, op. cit., p. 213.

⁸⁷ Cf. Bernard McGinn, 'Early Apocalypticism: The Ongoing Debate' in C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (ed.), *The Apocalypse, In English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, op. cit., pp. 21-23.

⁸⁸ Cf. D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic, Ancient and Modern*, op. cit., p. 51

⁸⁹ In past scholarly literature, countless studies understood Jewish Apocalypticism to be heavily influenced by Persian thought. In more recent times, Norman Cohn's groundbreaking study *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith*, op. cit., traces back to Persian Zoroastrianism key ideas and motifs of the Hebrew and Christian Eschatological speculation - such as cosmic dualism, afterlife, resurrection of the dead, world history periodized into aeons, the advent of a charismatic figure or saviour inaugurating the Millenarian Kingdom, etc. The same approach is endorsed by Mary Boyce, 'Persian Religion in the Achaemenid Age' and by Shaul Shaked 'Iranian influence on Judaism: first century B.C.E. to second century C.E' both in W. D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol. I, The Persian Period*, Cambridge: CUP, 1984, pp.1279-81 and pp.1308-25. John J. Collins assesses the Persian influx on Daniel (which is normally recognized as the first of the

canonical books which can be classified as Apocalyptic) and on Qumran's Apocalyptic writings (in particular the War Scroll depicting the final contrast opposing the Sons of Light to those of Darkness) respectively in *The Apocalyptic Imagination, An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, op. cit., pp.29-33 and pp. 85-116 and in *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London: Routledge, 1997, pp.41-43. On the other hand, according to Paul Hanson's seminal study *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, seeking for the origins of the Hebrew Apocalyptic literature primarily in the 'Persian soil' would be amiss. Rather than a direct borrowing from an outside tradition, Second Temple Apocalypticism would directly grow out of prophetic and even more archaic native roots. In particular, Hanson focuses his attention on that schismatic crisis generated by the contrast of two hierocratic circles, the 'priestly' and the 'prophetic' - a crisis which took place in postexilic times as a result of the loss of Hebrew nationhood. This inner doctrinal fracture, and not the Persian import, would account for the transition from the prophetic to the Apocalyptic Eschatology and, consequently, for relocating the religious and national hopes of final fulfilment and restoration from the historical plane to the cosmic level of myth. H. H. Rowley's work [*The Relevance of Apocalyptic: A Study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation*, Greenwood: The Attic Press, 1941], by contending that the Apocalyptic genre owes its birthright to the prophetic tradition, somehow subscribes to same thesis. Rowley however denies Hanson's ultimate division between prophetic and Apocalyptic Eschatology. For a review of the debate enhanced by an extensive bibliography see Robert R. Wilson, 'The Biblical Apocalyptic' in in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imagining the End, Visions of Apocalypses from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, op. cit., pp. 63-66.

⁹⁰ Collins maintains that whatever was taken over from Zoroastrianism cannot be regarded as a simple borrowing, since it was no doubt 'thoroughly reconceived and integrated with other [pre-existing] strands of thoughts' belonging to the Hebrew lore. Cf. John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination, An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, op. cit., p. 33.

⁹¹ Cf. M. H. Abrams, 'Apocalypse: Themes and Variations' in C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (ed.), *The Apocalypse, In English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, op. cit., pp. 345-6.

⁹² For a useful overview on Zoroastrian Dualism see Anders Ultgard, 'Persian Apocalypticism' in John Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Apocalypticism, Volume 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 39-84 and Philip G. Kreyenbrock, 'Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition' in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (edit), *Imagining the End, Visions of Apocalypses from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, op. cit., pp. 33-56.

⁹³ Cf. Norman Cohn, 'How Time Acquired a Consummation' in Malcolm Bull (ed.), *Apocalypse Theory and the Ends of the World*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, pp. 21-37.

⁹⁴ Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., pp. 96-99.

⁹⁵ Ibid pp. 82-83

⁹⁶ For an account of Zoroastrianism's influence over Hebrew and Christian Apocalypticism see Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., pp. 220-31 and Jeffrey B. Russell, *The Prince of Darkness, Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1988, pp. 19-23.

⁹⁷ For an historical account of religious dualism stemming from the Zoroastrian tradition see Yuri Stoyanov, *The Other God: Dualist Religions from Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy*, Yale: YUP, 2000.

⁹⁸ Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., p. 99.

⁹⁹ Cf. T. J. Wray and Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan, Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots*, London: Palgrave, 2005; and Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy, Satan and the Combat Myth*, Princeton: PUP, 1987.

¹⁰⁰ Bernard McGinn discusses the complex symbolism of the End Time adversary and provides a historical account of the development of its legend in *Antichrist, Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*, New York: Harper Collins, 1994. The appellative 'Antichrist' appears only three times in two minor epistles of the New Testament, 1 John and 2 John. It identifies and condemns - in a fairly obscure fashion - believers who were part of the early Christian community, but without fully conforming to its doctrines, which were beginning to consolidate as orthodox. In its Biblical formulation, the Johannine Antichrist stigmatizes apostate believers that are believed to undermine the community's theological purity, and not a supernatural 'monster chaos', opposing the creative deity in Eschatological times. This appears to be further confirmed by the fact that the author of the two letters refers to the Antichrist as *an* opponent of Christ (rather than *the* opponent) and deploys the term always in plural form, by designating all the dissenting members of the congregation as 'Antichrists'. Despite a first convergence between old and new Eschatological beliefs taking place at the closure of Second Temple Judaism, only from Patristic times onwards the Antichrist would be associated with dreaded figures such as the Beast or the Dragon - figures already used by well-established Apocalyptic texts, such as Daniel or Revelation, to name those ultimate emissaries of Satan

which must be defeated by the Messiah before the establishment of God's final rule. This association would be key to the development of the Antichrist's legend within Christianity, and it is still common practice in modern Fundamentalist circles. Cf. Robert Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist, The History of an American Obsession*, Oxford: OUP, 1995, pp.14-36; Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist, Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*, op. cit., Chapter I and II; and Gregory C. Jenks, *Origins and Early Developments of the Antichrist Myth*, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991, p.13, p.25, and pp.361-62.

¹⁰¹ In the introduction of his seminal study, McGinn underscores that the Antichrist, as an End Time opponent, remains dissimilar in scope and character from all the other countless manifestations of Evil within the Biblical tradition. Despite being much of his legend entwined with that of God's superhuman spiritual adversary, the Antichrist differs from the Devil in being foremost recognized as a human individual or collective agent. The key concern raised by such a belief is therefore that a principle of absolute Evil can be realized [incarnated] in a human living reality. This factor alone would account for the Antichrist legend's unique evocative power in the history of Christianity. Cf. Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist in Anti-Christ, Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

¹⁰² That the Antichrist represents a parody of the real article he opposes is confirmed by many details featuring in various renditions of its legend. Just as Christ would return to earth with the authority of His father God, the Beast or Antichrist would come with the authority of his father Satan. Further, his fathering is also a caricature of the Nativity myth since he is expected to be the fruit of Devil's impregnation of a mortal woman, more precisely, a prostitute. He would be a master of deceit, performing miracles and demanding to be worshiped as God. In some past and current Millenarian beliefs, it is also prophesized that the Antichrist would enter Jerusalem, so as to rebuild the Third Temple, and convert the Jews, who will initially embrace him as their ally.

¹⁰³ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

¹⁰⁴ Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven, A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁰⁵ Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe, German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment*, Berkeley: UCP, 2000, p. 32. Scholem maintains that the Messianic Age might be considered as 'transcendence breaking in upon history, an intrusion in which history perishes, transformed in its ruin because it is struck by a beam of light shining into it from an outside source'. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Paul Hanson *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic*, op. cit., pp. 1-31; Arthur P. Mendel, *Vision and Violence*, Ann Arbor: UMP, 1992, pp. 21-22; and John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London: Routledge, pp. 4-7.

¹⁰⁷ Henry H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic, A study of Jewish and Christian apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation*, op. cit., p. 38.

¹⁰⁸ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Religious Radicalism*, Chicago: CUP, , p. 171.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Arthur P. Mendel, *Vision and Violence*, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

¹¹⁰ Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., pp. 78-142.

¹¹¹ So dreadful are the birth pangs of the Messianic Age that a quote in the Babylonian Talmud attributed to three rabbis would state: 'May the Messiah come, but I do not want to see Him' (BT Sanhedrin 98a). Cf. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., p.13, Yakov M. Rabkin, *A Threat from Within, A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, London: Zed Books, 2006, pp. 71-81, Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 20.

¹¹² Cf. Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven, A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 43-48.

¹¹³ Duncan B. Forrester, *Apocalypse Now? Reflections on Faith in a Time of Terror*, London: Ashgate, 2005, pp. 52-53.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., p. 8.

¹¹⁵ Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe, German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment*, op. cit., p. 33.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, pp. 5-8.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., p. 8.

¹¹⁸ David Ohana, 'J. L. Talmon, Gershom Scholem and the Price of Messianism', *History of European Ideas*, N. 34, 2008.

¹¹⁹ On the themes concerning the Biblical apokatastasis see especially Ernesto De Martino, *The End of The World, A Contribution to the Analysis of Cultural Apocalypses*, Milano: Einaudi, 2002, pp. 215-17 [in Italian].

¹²⁰ Cf. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., p. 3.

¹²¹ Quoted in Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (Thesis XIV) in *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken, 1968, pp. 261.

¹²² Cf. Jacob Neusner, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecy, Exile and Return in the History of Judaism*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1987, pp. 222-24.

¹²³ Cf. Jacob Neusner, *Judaism*, London: Routledge, 2006, pp. 20-21.

¹²⁴ That the Jews placed the Messianic Age in the terrestrial realm rather than in the transcendental one seems to be confirmed by the fact that agricultural, pastoral and urban elements are intermingled in its imagery. For instance, Ezekiel (47:12) promises that, in the eternal Sabbath, on both of its banks, 'the river will grow all kind of trees. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing. The soil is so rich that every vine bears a thousand branches and every branch a thousand grapes'. All the abundance of the transformed earth might represent the symbolic counterpoint to a life spent in the desert or exile. Cf. Jeffry Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven, The Singing Silence*, Princeton: PUP, 1997, pp.30-33.

¹²⁵ Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., p. 140 and p. 153.

¹²⁶ Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 169.

¹²⁷ The otherworldly character of Christian redemption is particularly evident in John 6: 38, 8:23, 12: 31, 16: 28, 17: 16, and 18:36.

¹²⁸ Completely different from the attitude expressed by Jewish Apocalyptic literature, in many of its passages, the New Testament seems to disregard material and corporeal needs - especially those concerning sexuality. Matthew (6:25-28) for instance maintains 'do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on...Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap'. Further, in the soteriology of John (6:27, 51), the 'bread of the spirit' must supplant that of the flesh: 'Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life...I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever'. Many commentators interpret the Christian disregard for the earthly and the bodily - that is, all that corrupts and decays - as an inheritance from the Gnostic doctrine.

¹²⁹ The correspondence *Urzeit-Endzeit* was firstly underlined in 1895, by Hermann Gunkel's book *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. On the same analogy between end and beginning see also D.S. Russell, *Apocalyptic, Ancient and Modern*, op. cit., p. 34.

¹³⁰ M.H. Abrams, *Apocalypse: Themes and Variations*, op. cit., pp.346-7.

¹³¹ Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History*, op. cit., p.183.

¹³² Cf. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., p. 13

¹³³ Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1967, part I, pp.3-151.

¹³⁴ Karl Lowith, *Meaning in History*, op. cit., p.184.

¹³⁵ According to the Christian Bible, the final fulfilment, which transfigures this world into heaven, also represents a return to the happy original state of humanity before Adam's sin. Christ, in this sense, is often portrayed as the 'New Adam', renewing the flawed nature of the old one, who fell into sin. Yet, the heavenly paradise that takes place at the end is substantially different from the first Eden. As recounted in Luke 23:43, return to the bliss of the first Creation also implies the establishment of a state in which sin and death have been forever eliminated - that is, no other Fall can hinder the human condition. Cf. Gaetano Lettieri, 'The Ambiguity of Eden and the Enigma of Adam' in F. Regina Psaki (ed.), *The Earthly Paradise, The Garden of Eden from Antiquity to Modernity*, New York: Binghamton University Press, 2002.

¹³⁶ Cf. Regina M. Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating, On Milton's Theology and Poetics*, Chicago: CUP, 1988, p. 35 and Arthur O. Lovejoy, 'Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall', in *Essays in History of Ideas*, New York: Braziller, 1955.

¹³⁷ The *Saeculum*, argues St Augustine, is an intermediate age of harsh rehabilitation in light of the original sin: 'the world is like an oil-press: under pressure. If you are the dregs of the oil, you are carried away through the sewer. If you are genuine oil you will remain in the vessel. But to be under pressure is inevitable. Observe the dregs, observe the oil. Pressure takes place ever in the world, as for instance, through famine, war, want, inflation, indigence, mortality, rape, avarice. Such are the worries of the states: we have evidence of them. We have found men who grumble under these pressures and who say: "how bad are these Christian times!". Thus speaks the dregs of the oil, which run away from the sewer. Their colour is black because they blaspheme: they lack splendour. The oil has splendour. For here another sort of man is under the same pressure and friction which polishes him, for is it not the very friction which refines him?'. St Augustine, *Essential Sermons*, New York: New City Press, 2007, xxiv, p. 11.

¹³⁸ Cf. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., p. 47.

¹³⁹ Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., pp. 149-50; pp. 153-54; p. 156.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Jeffry Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven, The Singing Silence*, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land, The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine*, op. cit., pp. 134-35 and Philip Johnston and Peter Walker (ed.), *The Land of Promise: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives*, London: InterVarsity Press, 2000, p. 87 and p. 101. Just as the City is the quintessence of the land, so the Temple is the quintessence of Jerusalem. The significance of the Land as a whole comes therefore to be focussed in a special way on

Jerusalem, and at the heart of that City lays the Temple. Metonymy represents a figure of speech usually deployed in rhetoric so as to underlie that an object or concept is not identified by its own name, but rather by the name of something intimately associated with that object or concept. It is worth remembering that a metonymy differs from a metaphor since, in spite of the fact that either figures of speech are distinguished by a semantic substitution, in the former, such a substitution is justified by the idea of similarity, while in the latter, the substitution is justified by the idea of physical-spatial contiguity. In this sense, Land, City, and Temple of Jerusalem stand in metonymic contiguity.

¹⁴² Cf. Uriel Tal, 'Foundations of a Political Messianic Trend in Israel', *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, Number 35, Spring 1985.

¹⁴³ Cf. Jacob Neusner, *Judaism*, op. cit., pp. 38-46.

¹⁴⁴ The first Temple was erected in circa 967 bce, destroyed circa 586 bce by the Babylonians. The Second Temple was rebuilt circa 516 bce to be destroyed during the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 ce. As the Second Temple was being rebuilt, the prophets proclaimed that Jerusalem was the everlasting centre of Israel. Zion was originally a Jebusite fortress, just below what later became the Temple Mount. After King David captured Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant was brought within the walls of Jerusalem, which immediately became Yahweh's dwelling place on earth and the sacred centre of worship for the Hebrews. Later, as Solomon placed the Ark of the Covenant into the newly built Temple, the term Zion was transferred to the Temple Mount. In keeping with the same principle of metonymic contiguity, the term is often used interchangeably with the Temple, Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 54b.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., pp. 137-8.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Gershom Gorenberg, *End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, op. cit.; and Motti Imbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount, Who will Build the Third Temple*, New York: Suny Press, 2009.

¹⁴⁸ Borrowing considerably from the Hebrew imagery, the Eschatological heaven depicted in great concreteness by Revelation 21 is nothing but 'the transformed City of Jerusalem as well as the transformed Garden of Eden, which originally exists at the beginning of the world. The earthly Jerusalem that the Lord promised to Abraham and his descendants is a city renewed as the centre of the reign of God on earth, or transmuted into the heavenly Jerusalem promised to the members of Christ's body'. Jeffry Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven, The Singing Silence*, op. cit., pp. 50-51. As already mentioned in the first chapter, the Heavenly Jerusalem represents a prototype of divine perfection, built following golden architectonic standards: according to Ezekiel 45, 48 and 1 Kings, the shape of the Heavenly City is modelled on the Ark of the Covenant, the Temple and the Temple square. In the End Times, such a perfection would be transposed on earth, as the heavenly and physical Jerusalem are made indissolubly one, a realm where the community of the faithful would share the bliss of the angels. Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., p. 218.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Revelation 22:2.

¹⁵⁰ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986, Volume 2, p. 1132 quoted in Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, op. cit., pp. 50-3.

¹⁵² Ibid p.64.

¹⁵³ Quoted in Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, op. cit., p. 76.

¹⁵⁴ That Apocalypticism strongly devalues history is implicitly confirmed by one of its structural features, which Klaus Vondung characterizes as the 'reversal between beginning and end': 'this characteristic is made intelligible by the structure of Apocalyptic visionary accounts. While the narration of history moves from the beginning to an end, the narration of history of salvation, even from the beginning to the end, begins the Apocalyptic vision with the end and ends with a [new] beginning. It begins with the end of previous history. Only the end is important, while previous history is lost in the darkness of disinterest because of its meaningless. And it ends with the beginning of a new, perfect existence that continues into timelessness without end'. Ibid. p. 77.

Chapter III: The Millennium

Humankind deals with crucial existential problems not only through action, but also and foremost by means of symbols rendering the opaque comprehensible. The human mind always seeks 'unity of meaning' so as to make sense out of chaos. In line with this observation, we interpreted the Eschatological narrative as one of the most empowering forms of ordering activity. It allows individuals to live through disorientation, anomie and suffering by revealing a divinely ordained plan in which human history moves from one event to the next, purposely and deterministically progressing towards an ultimate goal. According to this plot, a supernatural or exceedingly powerful force will bring the world to a catastrophic end, but an elected number will be granted a new, regenerated life. In the Hebrew and Christian tradition, the Apocalypse may also involve an expectation of the *Millennium*: an earthly state of perfection, beyond historical time and before eternity, in which that elitist salvation will be accomplished. After having reached this intermediate fulfilment, all life-threatening impressions and events will no longer be impending upon the 'unfinished animal'. Such an image of 'perfection in equilibrium' entered the language, the mindset, and the store of common references of millions of people. In its various renditions and permutations, it represents a 'focal point' in the future, promising all the harmony and completeness that human limited and contingent existence may lack in the present.

As a key complement of the Eschatological-Apocalyptic belief system, Millenarianism can be defined either in a narrow or broad way. Adopting a conceptual and etymological approach, Millenarianism refers *narrowly* to the 'Biblical Millennium', an earthly 1000-year kingdom of plenty and peace following the Second Coming, which is prophesied in one passage of the Book of Revelation [20:4-7].¹ The Biblical Millennium represents a bridge between history and eternity, a limited episode that marks a transition towards something new and better, a perfect order that is timeless and changeless.² In this intermediate phase in which Satan is bound in a lake of fire, the 'martyrs' - a small number of faithful who suffered because of their unwavering faith - would be resurrected to reign with Christ until the Last Judgement. As a reward for their steadfast loyalty, these selected faithful will not only be redeemed from death with eternal life, but also vindicated from past oppression: 'those who had once suffered would receive justice, and the poor

and the powerless would gain what had been formally withheld from them'.³ Salvation in an earthly society in which all conflicts are resolved and all injustices removed is to be seen as a necessary prelude for that complete transfiguration of reality that is supposed to take place after the Last Judgement: the irruption of God's all-transforming rule in the 'New Heaven and a New earth', with the 'New Jerusalem' descending from heaven [Rev. 21]. Paradoxically, according to such strict criteria, early Christianity, itself a movement with a deep expectation in an imminent, this-worldly redemption, would eventually fall short of being categorized as 'Millenarian'. In the New Testament, apart from the aforementioned passage, there is no other unequivocal reference to an intermediate 1000-year kingdom of Christ.⁴

Loosing the literal ties to the Book of Revelation, the term Millenarianism may be *broadly* used to designate a systematic speculation about history that envisions a final condition of ultimate perfection, harmony or happiness, either on this earth or in heaven.⁵ The idea of a changeless state of perfection to come represents the core archetype of all Millenarian visions - even when these visions have no relation whatsoever to the Hebrew and Christian tradition or have long departed from such theological moorings. From an anthropological-primordialist perspective, Kenelm Burridge submits that

the Millennium is equivalent to salvation and redemption itself. Through and behind the variety of cultural idioms in which it may be expressed, the *Millennium* points to a condition of being in which humans become free-movers, in which there are no obligations, in which all earthly desires are satisfied and therefore expunged. A new earth merges into the new heaven.⁶

To Burridge, final salvation in the *Millennium* equals 'unobligeness' or 'release from all obligations'. If human life is an experience of 'general indebtedness' given its finitude and inherent deficiencies, Millenarianism aims at redeeming that condition by envisaging an order in which every individual becomes 'completely unobliged, without any obligation whatsoever - a free-mover in heaven'.⁷

The classificatory criteria of Millenarianism as a mode of thought intermingle with those defining a Millenarian group belonging or activity. In her pioneering work published in 1966, Yonina Talmond defined as Millenarian those movements that expect 'imminent, total, ultimate, this worldly, and collective salvation'. Such a salvation is supposed to be accomplished in an order of things that is not subject to further improvement.⁸ Norman Cohn's classic definition, the one unanimously quoted in every specialist study on the matter,

virtually reprises all Talmond's canons, but adds the observation that salvation is to be brought about by miraculous means'.⁹ I.C. Jarvie argues in favour of four basic attributes as common to all Millenarian movements: the promise of the imminent establishment of heaven on earth, the overthrow or reversal of the present social order, an extraordinary discharge of emotional energy, and a limited lifespan of the movement in its original form.¹⁰ Finally, John G. Gager adds to Jarvie's classification a fifth trait concerning the critical role that is played within the movement by the charismatic, prophetic, or messianic leader.¹¹

Scholarly debate on what constitutes a Millenarian activity is endless. It generally focuses on the taxonomy of the movements themselves - the description of constituencies, beliefs, environment, leaders, and cycles of development - with particular attention on isolating recurring uniformities in different historical manifestations. Finding similar features and comparing them is deemed to be conducive to discerning the underlying causes or the facilitating conditions that may produce a Millenarian movement. Time and again, *a priori* opinions of what constitutes an adequate account of those causes affect the selection of the salient features of the phenomena investigated. In many circumstances, descriptions are mistaken as exhaustive explanations.¹² Even though, to a certain extent, abstracting, classifying and comparing are necessary tasks to every understanding, an explanatory hypothesis reveals all its limitations when it lumps together phenomena that are historically and culturally disconnected or when it portrays the provisional as absolute. Millenarianism can be explained and made sense of in terms of theories that consider a number of factors in producing a unique phenomenon. In the following pages, a synthetic treatment will be offered about some of the most common hypotheses about the Millenarian appeal in past and current scholarship. Given the number of studies published on the subject, the coverage cannot be fully exhaustive, but it is indicative of the subject's complexity and relevance.

3.1 Disaster

In past scholarship, a consensus of opinion viewed Millenarianism as a response to a high degree of disorientation, lawlessness, and besetting anomie, attached to moments of social instability or traumatic change. In this sense, Michael Barkun's study was one of first to connect, almost deterministically, the

commitment to the Millenarian ideal to a wide range of real or perceived crisis, which he unified under the generic concept of 'disaster'.¹³ According to Barkun, Chiliastic phenomena tend to occur 'in times of upheavals, in the wake of cultural contact, economic dislocation, war and natural catastrophe'.¹⁴ Further, especially in modern social settings, 'demographic shifts, the rise and fall of cities, alteration in the status system, economic depression, and industrialization' might also constitute key predisposing factors.¹⁵ It is worth noting that the crisis put in being by the disaster must necessarily be both 'unexpected' and 'inexplicable'.¹⁶ It is not so much the critical situation in itself, but rather the failure of the established 'system of understanding' in accounting for it, to engender the psychological conditions in which the Millenarian vision may be invoked:

Scholars have widely agreed that the perception of rapid and inexplicable change that cannot be explained by the received system of belief plunges certain people into the terror of chaos and anomie and that this is the situation or context from which the [Millenarian ideal] springs. Supporting evidence for that contention may be found internally, within the contemporary [Millenarian] discourses themselves. They consistently speak to an audience's fear of change and bewilderment in the face of the inexplicable. These discourses articulate a sense of troubles and impending doom, but also a sense that these troubles cannot be understood with the audience's means of understanding.¹⁷

To be beyond control, a crisis or a radical change must exceed the scope and limits of one's framework of meaning. If a convincing reason for the direction that events are taking is not provided, traditional structures of order and authority are immediately put at risk of erosion and collapse. Their legitimacy relies on their capacity to project stability and contain the extraordinary by means of the ordinary. When a 'well-ordered' worldview is abruptly violated, individuals are pushed into uncharted waters, in search for new meanings supplanting the old, ineffective one. These are the facilitating circumstances in which the Millenarian discourse may attract an audience into its orbit. Transcendental forces offer an explanation of the present crisis and, at the same time, an unequivocal indication about how, in an imminent future, it will be resolved. For believers to whom events are devoid of meaning, the Apocalyptic-Millenarian discourse

asserts that everything makes sense, within the temporal scheme that it presents. The fact that some sort of culmination is at hand in the development of history is used to explain the audience's anomie and to offer advice on how to prepare for the end. An audience that knows it has lost control over events is reassured, not by regaining control, but by knowing that history is nevertheless controlled by an underlying order that it has purpose and that is nearing fulfilment.¹⁸

Consistent with its revelatory nature, the Apocalyptic-Millenarian discourse announces that history is a unitary, hyper-coherent whole marching onwards, towards a final redemption. Not only is this linear and telic process thought to be within the prevision and control of God, but believers are also told that signs for the advent of the Millennium are to be found in wars, revolutions, epidemics, natural calamities, and economic catastrophes. Before being regenerated and redeemed, the world must be fully pervaded by evil. As a symbolic system that harnesses disaster to the birth of a new order of perfection, the Apocalyptic-Millenarian vision replaces the received framework of explanation that people have lost. A sufficient degree of control is restored when distress, anxiety and sufferance are contextualized within and validated by a more general, cosmic drama in which everything that unfolds in time has a deterministic meaning and orientation.¹⁹ Paradoxically, the threat produced by experiences of drastic change, bewilderment and anomie is domesticated by valuing its very presence within a 'death-and-rebirth' scheme - a scheme that will come to fruition by an equally besetting catastrophe.

Barkun's assertion that disaster predisposes individuals to the 'Millenarian conversion' is however weakened by the author's own admission that the perception of the crisis is always 'in the eye of the beholder'.²⁰ Experiences of traumatic loss of meaning are processed through mental constructions. These, despite sharing in reality with things and empirical facts, cannot be 'objectively' grasped, since they are 'invisible' to outsiders. In other words, any inference dealing with human ideational processes runs up against one of psychology's key methodological limits: by assumption, what goes on inside the mind's 'black box' is never exhaustively accessible.²¹ Further, Barkun's contention may also be challenged on an ontological ground. As previously maintained, cultural production is an incessant symbolic effort to transcend what in principle cannot be transcended. Death was defined as the ultimate contradiction that humiliates our reason, by revealing the irreparably ersatz, brittle character of any meaning. In this sense, experience of crisis and failure of received symbolic frameworks are not anomalous, but systemic events. If anomie becomes endemic to the human condition, a deterministic relation between disaster and Millenarianism, at best, 'does not add much to our conceptual vocabulary' and, at worst, 'loses all its explanatory power'.²² As a single causative factor, the hypothesis put forward by Burke cannot comprehensively explain the reasons why Chiliastic movements come into

being. Individuals might experience disasters leading on to anomie, but only a minority of them falls prey to the Millennium's fascination.

3.2 Deprivation

Another frequent generalization about Millenarianism is that its occurrence, in the form of belief or practice, should be considered as a sort of 'coping mechanism', flourishing amongst the socially, politically, or economically marginalized. The opening statement of Cohn's seminal study about medieval revolutionary Millenarianism maintains that, lacking institutionalized channels for voicing their grievances and pressing their claims, the poor's desire to improve their material condition 'became transfused with fantasies of the new Paradise on earth - a world purged of suffering and sin, a Kingdom of the Saints'.²³ Poverty, Emile Cioran observes, is Millenarianism's 'great auxiliary':

Poverty is the matter [the Millenarian believer] works in, the substance on which he feeds his thoughts, the providence of his obsession. Without poverty he would be empty; (...) from another point of view, poverty cannot do without him - it needs this theoretician, this adept of the future, especially since poverty itself, that endless meditation on the likelihood of escaping its own future, would hardly endure its dreariness without the obsession of another earth. Can you doubt it? If so, it is because you have not tasted utter indigence. Do so and you will see that the more destitute you are, the more time and energy you will spend on [the idea of] reforming everything.²⁴

The Millenarian ethics of early Christianity have been convincingly interpreted as a reaction to social marginalization and disenfranchisement from rabbinical orthodoxy - that is, the dominant centre of hierocratic authority.²⁵ According to this perspective, the Biblical precept 'so the last shall be the first, and the first last' [Mat. 20:16] expresses the hope in a future 'reversal of fortunes', compensating for present severe circumstances.²⁶ That precept still retains remarkable purchase on those in social strata who are 'in some manner oppressed and who, at the same time, under the impulse of resentment, wish to free themselves from prevailing injustice'.²⁷ In the Millenarian grammar, abysmal despair in the present and fierce criticism of the old, corrupt order is always dovetailed with a vision of the new in which roles and prerogatives are reversed between outsiders and insiders.²⁸ Through its 'quest for new definitions of power, value and truth, as well as new path of access to them', Millenarianism displays a revolutionary side, which often can be directed against the established institutions.²⁹

In the scholarly debate, however, the need was recognized to avoid the unwarranted assumption that Millenarian imagery primarily appeals to the lowest socioeconomic strata. Such a depiction would fall short of providing a plausible explanation of the complex constellation of factors behind such phenomena. There are many more dispossessed and disenfranchised than members of Chiliastic movements. These may well include individuals who are neither poor nor alienated. Further, it remains rather unclear what typologies of deprivation, or degrees of it, are most likely to eventuate in Millenarian practices.

David Aberle's theory of 'relative deprivation' is an attempt to fill that chasm. It does so by ascribing to Millenarianism the interplay between external predisposing factors and human perception. It is worth underscoring that 'relative' deprivation - and not 'absolute' or 'objective' - represents a recurring precondition. The key element would be not so much whether one is actually deprived or oppressed, but rather whether one 'feels' so:

Relative deprivation may be defined as a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectation and actuality. Where an individual or a group has a particular expectation and furthermore where this expectation is considered to be a proper state of affairs, and where something less than that expectation is fulfilled, we may speak of relative deprivation. It is important to stress that deprivation is relative and not absolute. (...) It is not a particular objective state of affairs, but a difference between an anticipated state of affairs and a less agreeable actuality.³⁰

Seeking to ground his theory on measurable criteria, Aberle maintains that a Chiliastic mentality tends to prevail among those individuals who perceive a relative deprivation in the pursuit of four key domains: possession, status, behaviour, and worth.³¹ A marked disparity between 'what is' and 'what ought be' may occur because traditional expectations can no longer be met, as a result of contact with a foreign culture perceived as superior, or whenever new hopes arise, but for some reason remain unfulfilled.³² People whose expectation is frustrated may articulate their grievance through the Millenarian promise of a future reward and vindication. Despite its subtleties, this theory reveals all its limitations in isolating and evaluating the parameters and reference points by which individuals assess their legitimate expectations, as well as their actual life circumstances (the aforementioned 'black box' dilemma). Furthermore, there are many members of Millenarian groups - such as the ones formed by middle-class US Christian Fundamentalists - who do not think of themselves as economically or socially deprived, either in an absolute or relative sense. On the other hand, it has been equally argued that some sort of discrepancy between

expectations and actuality appears to be an inbuilt feature of humankind. As a result of that, deprivation theories may lose much of their argumentative plausibility. According to Thomas Hobbes's philosophy, man is not only hungry, but he is also 'fame futura famelicus' - he hungers for the future.³³ That longing for the 'not-yet-being' is always grounded in dismay and dissatisfaction with the present would suggest a sort of 'anthropological disposition' for the Millennium. Humankind, Cioran submits, acts only 'under the fascination of the impossible'. Common sense would recommend 'a given and existing happiness, which man rejects, and by this very rejection becomes a historical animal, that is, a devotee of imagined happiness'.³⁴

3.3 Between deficiency and fulfilment

Human experiences, Klaus Vondung maintains, can be conceived as 'movements in a field of tension' between poles of deficiency and plenitude. We have become acquainted with enough examples of our existential inadequacy. None of us is spared from all-pervading encounters with transience and loss, fallibility, aging, sickness and, finally, the last insurmountable limit: death. However, men and women are equally capable of attaining experiences of fulfilment at different levels by means of 'bodily and psychic wellbeing' or 'fortunate bonding with other human beings'.³⁵ As mentioned, one of the highest forms of plenitude, of 'existing and sharing in harmony with the world', can be achieved on the transcendental ground. Whoever experiences God in his or her soul moves towards the pole of fulfilment.³⁶ Further, in the structure of that field of tension, the poles of 'deficiency' and 'fulfilment' do not stand in mutual exclusivity, but relentlessly call one another. They construct and limit their essence and scope in dialectic terms: 'even if we get very close to one pole or the other, the tension is retained as a painful or hoped-for possibility'.³⁷ In this sense, deficiency, depending on our inherent 'lacking nature', is ancillary to our longing for plenitude. It is the motive why every human 'movement' in the field of tension is not directionless, but by default oriented towards the positive pole of fulfilment: 'we strive to attain fulfilment and happiness as perfectly and lastingly as possible, although [and because] we cannot free ourselves from the experience of deficiency'.³⁸ On this ground, Walter Benjamin maintained that the notion of redemption, which he understood as the loftiest idea of fulfilment, resonates inalienably with that of happiness: 'our image of happiness is indissolubly bound with that of redemption' only because happiness cannot be

fully attainable in the present.³⁹ Because plenitude and happiness are negated or only within a limited reach in this world, man has to recast his hopes in that to come. However, even a vision of transcendental fulfilment - that is, the human attempt to move the furthest towards the positive pole - is immediately countervailed by the awareness that this worldly deficiency, suffering and loss continue to exist. No gaze can be 'cast upwards', towards the divine, 'without brushing death, which bleaches everything'.⁴⁰

Millenarianism may be viewed as a set of symbols to interpret and systematize the existential tension between deficiency and fulfilment. It does so by bringing that contrast into a temporal sequence: the 'old order', including all previous history and the present, is placed into a condition of utter deficiency, whereas fulfilment is projected into an imminent future. Millenarianism's symbolic structure operates by reordering what seems to have become an unmanageable mayhem into sharply contrasted binaries. Life-experiences - numberless and unrelated human movements along the deficiency-fulfilment continuum - are reified into a schema of unbridgeable, dualistic contrasts and, then, deterministically oriented towards a final synthesis. The Millenarian message is built upon a series of distinctive antithesis (light/darkness; purity/impurity; old age/new age; wicked/saved; etc.), but, at the end, all historical threads will meet in a oneness. This conclusive synthesis has to be seen as a reality *sui generis*: as 'something quite different from, and larger than, the sum of the parts which comprise it'.⁴¹ A unity that cannot be further broken down into contraries represents an ultimate unity and, at the same time, the essence of every Millenarian utopia.

According to the Book of Revelation, the nature of this synthesis is twofold. On the one hand, fulfilment entails changeless and eternal perfection. The Millenarian Kingdom is a 'piece of transcendence' descended and implemented on earth. The field of tension is brought to a final solution, and the faithful share in God's divine attributes. The visions of the Apocalypse describe a day in which 'there will be no further need for tears, and the soul will remain forever enthralled by joy'.⁴² On the other, a radical reversal of power structures is expected to follow at the lowest point of deficiency. Suffering, persecution, and chaos become decisive 'signs and wonders' for the End of Time and, thus, for the Lord's advent. In the new, regenerated order, 'power will be taken from the Beast and transferred to those who are still deprived and oppressed'.⁴³ Revelation, along with many other Apocalyptic compositions, reveals a

characteristic pattern in which 'present crisis', 'coming judgement', and 'final vindication' are acts of the same eschatological plot:

An indispensable characteristic of the Apocalyptic Eschatology is the divinely predetermined pattern of crisis, judgement and vindication that marks the End. Apocalypses that show any interest in history at all have some variations on this pattern, that is, they see the present time as one of some form of crisis (most frequently, the growth of evil and the persecution of the just); they look forward to judgement in which the wicked are punished and the just approved; and finally they expect a triumphant vindication of the suffering of the just, most commonly in terms of immortality, but frequently also including the resurrection of the body, the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom and the transformation of the universe.⁴⁴

According to this triple-act drama, the visionary new world stands in a radical qualitative contrast to the old. That contrast leading to synthesis is also morally charged. The conclusive fulfilment, centred on a retributive act followed by the reward of immortality, is to be obtained by the purging of the 'wicked'. The agents of evil held responsible for the deficiencies of the previous order of existence are eliminated with its spoils. Millenarian fulfilment, argues Richard Fenn, is nothing but a 'story of restoration, reversal, and redemption', where, on a final day, old losses are redeemed and ancient scores settled in a divine courtroom.⁴⁵

Vondung's main conceptual contribution consists in having emphasized the interpretative bearing of the Apocalyptic-Millenarian symbolism over external causative factors. Anomie, oppression, and deprivation, *per se*, are inadequate analytical standpoints. There are innumerable circumstances in which social fringes perceived themselves as being deprived, persecuted or in a deep anomic state, but this did not lead them onto an Apocalyptic verge. Fruitful possibilities of understanding Millenarianism emerge not from historically contingent events considered as 'objective' explanatory causes, but also from an analysis of the symbolic structures whereby those events were interpreted. Human experiences are unique, made in ever changing historical-cultural contexts, and filtered by cognitive processes whose intelligibility is limited. The symbolic nature of the medium channelling and articulating those experiences remains nevertheless universally constant. Individuals refer to symbolic forms in order to obtain 'unity of meaning' out of the reality in which they participate. It can be concluded that different experiences become comparable to one other, and thus somehow comprehensible in their essence, to the extent that their interpretive symbols reflect a similar structure. That shared ground may be represented by the ways in which, in different Apocalyptic-Millenarian

constructs, the tension between deficiency and fulfilment is interpreted. The contention here is that Millenarianism, rather than being a more or less determinist response to distinctive events, should be considered as a 'symbolic prism' through which believers can decipher and put their lives into a convincing perspective. As a literary genre, Apocalyptic and Millenarian writings were themselves produced out of historical situations in which the contrast between deficiency and fulfilment was perceived as unbearably tensioned.⁴⁶ By virtue of having to some extent succeeded in bringing that field of tension towards a solution, the symbols contained in those texts acquired the status of received hermeneutical tools. Over the centuries, they entered human collective imaginary as deep metaphoric structures, psychological archetypes, and rhetorical devices, available to be deployed and adapted, whenever similar interpretative needs would arise.⁴⁷

3.4 Messianism

The term 'Messianism' was coined at the beginning of the nineteenth century to describe Jewish Eschatological speculations. Such a term expresses the hope in a decisive and radical leap from deficiency to fulfilment, which will take place in the life conditions of the religious community. It is noteworthy that in Judaism the Messianic ideal associates transcendental longings with concrete ambitions:

The day would come when the Jewish people, the whole Congregation of Israel, would reassemble as one in an undivided Land of Israel, reconstituting its life there in all its aspects. The Jewish people would free themselves completely from their subjugation to the great powers. They would bring about the redemption of the world as a whole.⁴⁸

The End Time revolutionary breakthrough leading all at once to the Messianic Age is meant to fully realize the Covenantal promise by bringing the exile of the Chosen to an irrevocable conclusion, to defeat the hostile foreign rule, and to restore a Torah-centred Davidic Kingdom in its integral biblical territory. Further, the fate of mankind and the entire cosmic order is also portrayed as being contingent upon these historical realizations. In its essence and meaning, Messianism is therefore an all-encompassing and hyperbolic 'dream of perfection'.⁴⁹

Despite different approaches to the idea of redemption, these speculations were made to correspond to those animating Christian Millenarianism.⁵⁰ In the scholarly lexicon, Messianism and Millenarianism - along with their respective

adjectives - are often deployed interchangeably, in light of that idea of ultimate harmony, which lies at the heart of both conceptions. However, in a more restricted usage, the former may also emphasize the centrality of a 'numinous leader', as the agent of a salvation agenda. Following such understanding, Messianism, rather than referring to the expectation of a revolutionary change, would firstly denote a movement, or a system of beliefs and ideas, centred on the expectation of the saviour, who is supposed to bring that change about.⁵¹

Although the most recent amongst the terms discussed here, Messianism relates to one of the most ancient Biblical ideas. It is etymologically derived from 'messiah', an English transliteration of the Hebrew word *mashiah*: 'the anointed one'. In the Judaic tradition, it is recounted that objects, buildings, and especially people, were consecrated to a relevant office or role within Israel, by a rite of anointment with oil. This solemn ceremony was primarily performed on the occasion of a king's enthronement or a high priest's investiture, conferring a sacral gloss and elite status on the recipients.⁵² In its early stages, Messianism thereby emerged and consolidated with a distinctive twofold nature, the *kingly* and *priestly*, indicating present, political and religious leaders who were appointed by God.⁵³ Later, as a result of the oppressive foreign rule and social unrest distinguishing the 'intertestamentary period', Messianism took another direction, acquiring a more futuristic and Apocalyptic tone.⁵⁴ Yet, this crucial development occurred without solving the ambiguity related to the identity of the numinous leader. On the one hand, the Messiah is identified with a coming 'warrior king': a human, political figure, who would militarily defeat Israel's enemies, restore the Davidic dynasty from which he descends, ingather the exiles, rebuild the Temple, and reign forevermore, in righteousness and wisdom, as Yahweh's vicar.⁵⁵ On the other, the redeemer is the 'Son of Man': a semi-divine prophetic figure, appearing at the End Time to save and vindicate the righteous from the dominion of the wicked, judge the living and the dead according to their deeds, and usher in the Messianic Kingdom in which the faithful would live in peace and happiness. It is worth noting that, despite the absence of an agreed synthesis of the Messiah's various meanings and identities,⁵⁶ the political and religious dimensions seem to intermingle in his agency. The Lord's anointed 'thinks religiously and acts politically'. Further, especially during the intertestamentary phase, the Messiah increasingly assumed an Eschatological role, 'presiding over End Time wars, smiting evil nations, delivering the chosen, restoring the empire, and reigning universally, absolutely, and vicariously for the deity he claims as his otherworldly ally'.⁵⁷

This sort of Messiah no longer symbolizes the advent of the new order, but he is somehow supposed to actively establish it.

Early Christianity, a movement expecting the imminent return of Jesus inaugurating the Kingdom of God, may to that extent be viewed as either Millenarian or Messianic. The most commonly recognized divergence between Christian and Jewish Messianism consists in that the former awaits the End Time saviour not the first time, but for the second. Nevertheless, other relevant matters should be mentioned here, so as to differentiate between the two belief systems and, at the same time, make sense of Christian Messianism as a whole. In several of its passages, the New Testament refutes the political Messiahship characterizing the Jewish Eschatological expectations. Despite having been accused of pretending to be the 'King of the Jews', and eventually having been crucified for that reason, Jesus of Nazareth deliberately avoids any self-reference by using the term 'Messiah'. Given the implications of being identified as the 'anointed', He opts for the more apolitical designation of 'Son of Man'.⁵⁸ Only the redactors of the Gospel of Matthew seem to uphold Jesus' political Messiahship by making a 'straight equation' between Him and the King of the Jews (Matt. 1: 17,18). So as to legitimate Him as the redeemer whose advent was foretold by the writers of the Old Testament, Jesus is repeatedly addressed as 'the Son of David' or 'the Christ', titles evoking a direct lineage from the Davidic dynasty.⁵⁹ Yet, some in critical Biblical scholarship argue the thesis that that kingly Messianic status, rather than being political, should be interpreted in light of Jesus' compassionate action in favour of the needy and marginalized. Jesus perceived himself as the 'Messiah of the poor'. In that guise, He was expected to overthrow the Roman rule in Palestine and accomplish the Kingdom of God in the near future, not by leading an armed uprising, but by advocating non-violent resistance.⁶⁰ According to Luke, Jesus, since the very beginning of His ministry, rejected the dream of forcing the end: a rebellious act against the authorities would not have triggered a divine intervention in favour of the oppressed (as the Messianic nationalism of the Zealots assumed), but rather an endless circle of retaliation followed by further violence.⁶¹

Having acknowledged the multidimensional character of the Christian Messiah, it is worth concluding this section by addressing a final, but relevant ambiguity of meanings concerning such an Eschatological figure. In the New Testament, two seemingly contradictory images of Jesus, and two distinct redemptive approaches associated with those images, stand beside each other, in uneasy union: the idea of the 'suffering Messiah', promoted in the Gospels,

and that of 'the Lamb', depicted in John's Revelation. The former notion, which was key to the later development of Christianity, represents a sheer contradiction in terms for Judaism. According to the Messianic expectations of first century Palestine, the End Time saviour was expected to come in glory and deliver the Children of Israel from the yoke of the foreign powers, rather than being humiliated and crucified by them. There is no doubt that Jesus' Calvary at Golgotha represented not only a major obstacle to the conversion of many Jews to Christianity, but also a shocking disconfirmation to the members of that movement: 'insofar as the followers of Jesus shared the views of their time, they were unprepared for the death of the one whom they believed to be the fulfilment of their Messianic dreams'.⁶² The early Church had thus to produce a substantial effort in terms of scriptural rationalization so as to convince others and itself that Jesus' suffering and death were both 'beneficial and necessary'. In the passages of Mark, Matthew and Luke, that glaring refutation of the Hebrew prophecies is turned into supporting evidence: truthful interpretations of those prophecies demonstrate that, since the very beginning, it was intended that the Son of Man needed to suffer and die before receiving dominion from God, His father.⁶³ Consistent with such Christological view, the human redemptive process would depend primarily on the bearing of the Cross - that is, Jesus' Passion and Resurrection. Peter Berger contends that, at the basis of Christianity's success as a world religion, stands the remarkable appeal of its 'masochist theodicy' - a theodicy whose plausibility relies on the historical evidence that the incarnate God is also a man who suffers and dies so as to be resurrected.⁶⁴ It is only by virtue of a crucified Messiah, observes Albert Camus, that human agony can be tempered by a 'strange form of happiness':

In that Christ had suffered, and had suffered voluntarily, suffering was no longer unjust and all the pain was necessary. In one sense, Christianity's bitter intuition and legitimate pessimism concerning human behaviour is based on the assumption that overall injustice is as satisfying to man as total justice. Only the sacrifice of an innocent God could justify the endless and universal torture of innocence. If everything, without exception, in heaven and earth is doomed to pain and suffering, then a strange form of happiness is possible.⁶⁵

Despite the poignant paradox he raises, Camus omits here a critical point: that apparently absurd happiness becomes instantly plausible once the relationship linking Christian pain and suffering to the accomplishment of redemption is considered. The Gospels tell us that, through his martyrdom, the risen Messiah fought and won not an Eschatological confrontation against earthly powers and principalities, but humankind's most daunting battle: the

battle against death.⁶⁶ By virtue of the promise that, following His path, all of the faithful may eventually receive the same kind of 'immunity bath' from the greatest of evils, the Christian Church was able not only to survive the crisis originating from the defeat of its Messiah, but also to flourish, as it did over the following centuries.⁶⁷ If a crucified Jesus appeared as a 'great rock of offence' to some of His first followers, today, for many Christians and institutionalized churches, crosses are objects of devotion and jewellery.⁶⁸

Insofar as the Gospels' idea of a suffering Messiah breaks with the glorious visions distinguishing Hebrew Eschatology, the 'Lamb' depicted in the last book of the Christian canon restores those visions to their utmost degree. In spite of the fact that Revelation was written so as to avoid, rather than to encourage, human aggression against others, violence is no doubt prominent amongst its pages.⁶⁹ Themes, symbolism and language deployed are those characterizing the 'Combat Myth' of Middle Eastern civilizations: an ancient paradigm of cosmic duel envisaging God's final and total triumph over the forces of chaos.⁷⁰ As future saviour who does battle on behalf of his chosen to annihilate their demonic adversaries, the Christ of the Apocalypse is in perfect continuity with Israel's tradition of Holy War - a tradition in which the Davidic Messiah embodies a divine warrior leading his consecrated armies to a conclusive victory.⁷¹ The avenging Lamb rides on a white horse, at the head of a host of angels and saints, to cleanse once and for all the world of Satan's progeny and establish his Millenarian Kingdom on earth.⁷² With such prophecies, the Book of Revelation stands at the end of the Christian Scriptures, placing its stamp upon it.⁷³ When radical Millenarians interpret the entire Bible through the lens of its epilogue, the message of forgiveness and non-violent resistance contained in the Gospels is simply subsumed under the rubric of redemptive wrath. No matter how destructive the battle against the evil forces becomes, the Lamb and his chosen will prevail both in this world and in the next one.⁷⁴

¹ 'Millenarianism' describes a religious belief, which pertains the 'Millennium' - a term that itself derives from the Latin *mille* (thousand) and *annus* (year) hence the spelling with a double 'n'. The synonymous 'Chiliasm', less common in the English usage, comes from the Greek numeral *chilioi* (one thousand). In the following pages, these terms will be used alternatively. For a general terminological outline see John M. Court, *Approaching the Apocalypse, A Short History of Christian Millenarianism*, op. cit., pp. 1-13.

² George Shepperson was one of the first scholars to notice how the term 'Millennium' is often inaccurately used, by emphasising its final rather than transitional character. Cf. George Shepperson, 'Comparative Study of Millenarian Movements' in Sylvia L. Thrupp (ed.),

Millennial Dreams in Action, Studies in Revolutionary Movements, New York: Schocken Books, 1966, p.44.

³ Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy, Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, Los Angeles: UCP, 2003, p.16.

⁴ According to the New Testament scholar Stanley Porter, Millenarian imagery and language would be more developed in the literature of the Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology, especially in the authors of the intertestamental period such as Enoch, Ezra and Isaac. Beside the Book of Revelation, vague or hinted references to the Millenarian Kingdom can be found only in 1 Corinthians Hebrews 12:22-4, 2 Peter 1:11, and in the Pauline Letters [1 Thessalonians 4:13-8] concerning the dual resurrection. These passages are however fraught with hermeneutical asperities. Further, Porter notes that there are key passages in the Gospels whose meaning contradicts the eschatological perspective endorsed in Revelation 20. For instance, John 18:35-6 seems to deny the idea of Jesus as the initiator of a this-worldly, Millenarian Kingdom, by narrating that, when Pilate asks Jesus about His kingdom, Jesus replays: 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews'. Cf. Stanley E. Porter, 'Millenarian Thought in the First Century Church' in Stephen Hunt (ed.), *Christian Millenarianism, From the Early Church to Waco*, Bloomington: IUP, 2001, pp. 62-70.

⁵ Cf. Catherine Wessinger, 'Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution and Violence' in Catherine Wessinger (ed.), *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence, Historical Cases*, Syracuse: SUP, 2000, p. 6.

⁶ Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven and New Earth, A Study of Millenarian Activities*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1980, p.195.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

⁸ Cf. Yonina Talmond, 'Millennial Movements', *Archives Europeennes de Sociologie*, 7, 1966, pp.159-200.

⁹ Cohn's famous definition states that 'Millenarian movements always picture salvation as: a) collective, in the sense that it is to be enjoyed by the faithful as a collectivity; b) terrestrial, in the sense that it is to be realized on this earth and not on some other-worldly heaven; c) imminent, in the sense that it is to come both soon and suddenly; d) total, in the sense that it is utterly to transform life on earth, so that the new dispensation will be no mere improvement on the present but perfection itself; e) miraculous, in the sense that it is to be accomplished by, or with the help of, supernatural agencies'. This taxonomic definition is absent in the first and second edition of the book. It appears in the 1970 third edition, but without acknowledging the evident contribution of Talmond. Cf. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium, Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁰ Cf. I. C. Jarvie, *The Revolution in Anthropology*, Chicago: Regnery, 1967, p.52.

¹¹ John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community, The Social World of Early Christianity*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1975, p. 21.

¹² Cf. Malcolm B. Hamilton, 'Sociological Dimension of Christian Millennialism' in Stephen Hunt (ed.), *Christian Millenarianism, From the Early Church to Waco*, op. cit., pp.12-23.

¹³ Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium*, New Haven: YUP, 1974.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 52.

¹⁶ Cf. Barry Brummett, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric*, New York: Praeger, 1991, p. 22.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 37.

¹⁹ Apocalyptic-Millenarian narrative's powerful sense of determinism has been underlined by Bernard McGinn in the introduction of his *Visions of the End, Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, op. cit.; and by Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, op. cit., p. 406.

²⁰ Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium*, op. cit., p. 60.

²¹ The psychoanalyst Ronald D. Laing observes that, as mental constructions, human experiences are caught in a paradox that he defines as 'the crux of social phenomenology'. They are 'invisible' to others than the self, but at the same time more evident than anything else: 'I cannot experience your experience, you cannot experience mine. We are both invisible men. All men are invisible to one another. Experience as invisibility of man to man is at the same time more evident than anything. Only experience is evident'. Cf. Ronald D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience and the Birth of Paradise*, London: Penguin, 1967. pp. 16-17.

²² Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse, A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, op. cit., p. 9.

²³ Cf. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, (1957 edition), op. cit., p. xiii.

²⁴ Emile Cioran, *History and Utopia*, London: Quartet, 1987, pp. 81-2.

²⁵ Richard Horsley interprets early Christianity as an Apocalyptic-Millenarian movement of renewal and resistance to imperial domination and / or oppressive domestic centres of religious and political authority, which arose among the ordinary Judean and Galilean peasantry and involved circles of dissident scribes. Cf. Richard A. Horsley, 'The Kingdom of God and the Renewal of Israel: Synoptic Gospels, Jesus Movement and Apocalypticism' in John J. Collins

(ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Apocalypticism, The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 303-344.

²⁶ Gager maintains that the 'ethic of poverty' embedded in Matthew 20:16 reflects 'the fact that early Christian believers came primarily from disadvantaged groups and that in return they were rewarded with the promise that poverty, not wealth, was the key to the Kingdom'. John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, op. cit., p.24.

²⁷ Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven and New Earth*, op. cit., p.13. See also the understanding of the Book of Revelation from a Liberation Theology and Feminist perspective in David Rhoads (ed.), *From Every People and Nation, The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

²⁸ Cf. John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

²⁹ David F. Aberle, 'A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory as applied to Millenarian and other Cult Movements' in Sylvia L. Thrupp (ed.), *Millennial Dreams in Action*, op. cit., p. 209.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 210.

³¹ Cf. Adela Yarbo Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis, The Power of the Apocalypse*, op. cit., p. 84 and pp. 105-6.

³² Relative deprivation theory has also been complemented by the sociological notion of 'status inconsistency'. Cf. Malcolm B. Hamilton, 'Sociological Dimension of Christian Millennialism' in Stephen Hunt (ed.), *Christian Millenarianism, From the Early Church to Waco*, op. cit., p. 20-23.

³³ Cf. Thomas Hobbes, *Man and Citizen: De Homine and De Cive*, London: Hackett, 1991, pp. 3-33.

³⁴ Emile Cioran, *History and Utopia*, op. cit., p. 81.

³⁵ Cf. Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, op. cit., pp. 50-67.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 53.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 51.

³⁸ Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, op. cit., p.52.

³⁹ Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (Thesis II) in *Illuminations*, op. cit., pp. 253-54.

⁴⁰ Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, op. cit., p. 332.

⁴¹ Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven and New Earth*, op. cit., pp. 146-47.

⁴² Richard Fenn, *Dreams of Glory*, op. cit., p. 15.

⁴³ Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, op. cit., p. 68-69.

⁴⁴ Bernard McGinn, 'The Early Apocalypticism: The Ongoing Debate' in C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (ed.), *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

⁴⁵ Cf. Richard Fenn, *Dreams of Glory*, op. cit., p. 56. Norman Cohn observes that 'in the synoptic Gospels, in Acts, and in the Pauline Letters, Jesus appears as judge of the world – alongside God or in God's place. Above all he was expected to act as God's plenipotentiary at the Last Judgement'. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come*, op. cit., p. 207.

⁴⁶ For an account of the historical circumstances in which Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism originated see respectively John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, op. cit., pp. 1-43 and Adele Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, op. cit., chapter III.

⁴⁷ See the difference between canonical and interpretative Apocalypses in Frank Kermode, 'Apocalypse and the Modern' in Saul Friedlander, Gerald Holton, Leo Marx and Eugene Skolnikoff (ed.), *Visions of Apocalypse, End or Rebirth?*, London: Holmes, 1985, pp. 87-88.

⁴⁸ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p.1.

⁴⁹ Cf. David Ohana, 'J.L. Talmon, Gershom Scholem and the price of Messianism', op. cit., p. 170.

⁵⁰ Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, op. cit., p. 28.

⁵¹ Cf. Frank Graziano, *Millennial New World*, Oxford: OUP, 1999, pp. 9-11.

⁵² In the Hebrew Scriptures, the term 'mashiah' is used in reference to the actual king of Israel: Saul (1 Sm. 12:3-5, 24:7-11), David (2 Sm. 19:21-22), Solomon (2 Chr. 6:42), or the king in general (Ps. 2:2, 18:50, 20:6, 28:8, 84:9, 89:38, 89:51, 132:17). The second usage refers to the 'anointed priest' (Ex 28:36, 29: 4-7, 39:30 and Lv 6:13, 8: 6-12, 15, 16:32). Cf. Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions*, op. cit., pp. 103-4 and pp. 398-400.

⁵³ The Apocalyptic tone of Jewish Messianism developed during the second half of the Second Temple period from approximately 220 b.c.e. to 70 c.e. - also known as 'intertestamentary period'.

⁵⁴ According to the Psalms of Solomon (17-18), the zealous Messiah who will purge the Holy Land from sinners is not divine, nor does he have a divine status. He is a true descendant from the Davidic dynasty, through whom the nation of Israel will be restored. Cf. John Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: the Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, New York: Doubleday, 1995, p. 11 and James Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity: the First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987, p. xv.

⁵⁵ In the Apocalyptic passages of the Hebrew Scriptures, there is a constant ambiguity about the human or superhuman nature of the End Time redeemer. In the prophetic dream of the Book of Daniel (7: 13-14), there are hints that the Son of Man commissioned by God is a divine, and not earthly king: a 'human being coming from the clouds of heaven' will receive everlasting kingship and power to liberate his people from the 'evil human kingdoms'. Cf. Tremper Longman, 'The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings' in Stanley Porter (ed.), *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007, pp. 26-7.

⁵⁶ Mark J. Boda observes that, although 'there is nothing like a commonly agreed delineation of what the Messiah would be like', within the Judaic tradition, the redeemer may be defined, firstly, according to a particular sociological role: 'the anointed one can be predominantly royal, but also can be priestly or prophetic'. Secondly, this figure can be interpreted according to a temporal reference: on the one hand, the saviour can be a 'present, political, and religious leader who is appointed by God'. On the other, the Messiah may be identified as a 'future royal figure, sent by God, who will bring salvation to God's people and the world, and establish a kingdom characterized by features of peace and justice'. Cf. Mark J. Boda, 'Figuring the Future: the Prophet and Messiah in Writings' in Stanley Porter (ed.), *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, op. cit., pp. 35-45. Norman Cohn adds a third definitional category based on the transcendental or human nature of the Eschatological redeemer. Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., pp. 204-5.

⁵⁷ Frank Graziano, *Millennial New World*, op. cit., p. 9.

⁵⁸ Jesus rejects the political messiahship described in the Psalm of Solomon in the famous passages of John 6:15 and 18:36. The expression 'Son of Man' occurs 82 times in the four Gospels, and four times in other New Testament books. It is used almost exclusively for the sayings of Jesus, namely to draw attention to the fact that 'He was teaching and acting among men with direct authority of God, not as a superhuman figure, but as one who is subject to death like anyone else'. See the entry 'Son of Man' in John Bowker (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, Oxford: OUP, 1997, p.914 and Barnabas Lindars, 'Son of Man' in R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden, *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, op. cit., pp.639-642.

⁵⁹ The genealogy that Matthew offers right at its outset 'traces the forebears of Jesus back to Abraham and thus indicates that he is a member of the Jewish people as well as specifically belonging to the kingly line of David'. Howard Marshall, 'Jesus as Messiah in Mark and Matthew' in Stanley Porter (ed.), *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, op. cit., p.135. 'Christ' is the English transliteration of Greek *Khristós*, a term meaning 'covered in oil', and therefore to be considered as the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Mashiah*.

⁶⁰ Cf. Matthew 26: 52. For an analysis of the alternative, non-violent Messianism that Jesus developed in the midst of the pre-revolutionary period in which Christianity was born see Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation*, Edinburg: Clark, 1993; Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998; and, more recently, Duncan B. Forrester, *Apocalypse Now? Reflection on Faith in a Time of Terror*, op. cit.

⁶¹ Cf. Luke 4: 5-8; 19: 41-44; 23:26:31.

⁶² John Gager convincingly argues this point in *Kingdom of Community, The social World of Early Christianity*, op. cit. , pp.41-43. In 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul says "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles a foolishness". Mark (8: 27-29) reports Peter expressing dismay, inability of either comprehend or accept the idea of Jesus' suffering and death, feelings somehow corresponding to the universal belief of early Christianity.

⁶³ Matthew (16:21) portrays Jesus as predicting his coming suffering and crucifixion: "From that time forth began Jesus to show his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day". The same prediction is recounted in Mark 8:31 and Luke 9:22, 24:25. In the view of most contemporary critics, this effort of rationalization took place in form of 'vaticinia ex eventu', that is to say, 'prophecies of the past', which were to be interpreted, by the Christian believers, as dogmatic assertions of faith. Cf. Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, New York: Harper and Row, 1969, p. 133.

⁶⁴ Berger argues that the formidable potency of the Christological theodicy works only if both the full divinity and the full humanity of the incarnate Messiah can be simultaneously maintained. Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy, Elements of Sociological Theory of Religion*, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

⁶⁵ Albert Camus, *The Rebel, An Essay on Man in Revolt*, New York: Vintage, 1992, p. 56 quoted in Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 77.

⁶⁶ The doctrine of the resurrection emerged as a pillar of Christian faith especially through the Pauline Epistles. In I Corinthians (15: 4-8, 11-14), for example, it is maintained that '[Jesus] was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. (...) Now if this is what we proclaim, that Christ was raised from the dead, how can some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

and if Christ be not risen, then [is] our preaching vain, and your faith [is] also vain'. For an extensive treatment of the theme within the Christian tradition see Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David Tombs, *Resurrection*, op. cit. Attached to Paul's original doctrinal core later developed the Millenarian belief of the two resurrections, 'one for those believers who have died (allowing them to participate fully in the Millennial Kingdom), and one for those alive at the return of Christ'. Cf. Stanley E. Porter, 'Millenarian Thought in the First Century Church' in Stephen Hunt (ed.), *Christian Millenarianism, From the Early Church to Waco*, op. cit., p. 72.

⁶⁷ Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., p. 203.

⁶⁸ Cf. Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet*, op. cit., p. 170.

⁶⁹ Cf. Adela Yarbo Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis, the Power of the Apocalypse*, op. cit., pp. 156-9, 171-2, 173.

⁷⁰ The narrative plot of Revelation's Chapter 12, 13 and 19 provides a Christian, powerful version of the mythic pattern of combat – a pattern quite common amongst the ancient Middle Eastern civilizations. The Eschatological battle is fought in order to rid the cosmos, wholly and forever, of every form of disorder and establish an everlasting harmony (the Millennium), which will no longer be threatened. Cf. Adela Yarbo Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Harward: Scholar Press, 1976, pp. 130-145; pp. 157-190; and pp. 231-34.

⁷¹ Despite the fact that there is no evidence that John expected Christians to take active part in the End Time confrontation with the demonic forces (most likely identified with the Roman Empire), the basic principle of his Apocalyptic composition reprises and amplifies patterns and imagery of the Hebrew Holy War, a tradition presenting the anointed one as the 'divine warrior'. Cf. Patrick D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, Harvard: HUP, 1973, pp. 64-5 and p.113.

⁷² 'And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns (...). And he was clothed with a cloak dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies of heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth there went a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS' (Rev 19: 11-16). Neil Forsyth maintains that the imagery of John's Apocalyptic composition 'continues and extends the common tendency of Judaism to project political repression onto the cosmic stage – and then work out the fantasy of revenge in a combination of military and symbolic visions, such as the white horse and its supernatural rider'. Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy, Satan and the Combat Myth*, op. cit., p. 256.

⁷³ Jürgen Moltmann underscored the outcome of reading the Bible as a 'divine prophecy' of future history, rather than a document of God's self-revelation: 'If the rule of God is the scarlet thread running through the writings of the Old and the New Testament, (...) then the Revelation of John becomes, as the last book in the Bible, the most important, for it contains the prophecies of End Time, the beginning of which can already be detected in the present'. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God, Christian Eschatology*, London: Fortress, 2004, p. 6.

⁷⁴ Cf. Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil, The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmads, 2003, p. 54. Mendel [Vision and Violence, op. cit., pp. 40-41] moves a strong counterargument against the classic idea positing cleavage between Revelation's avenging Lamb and the Gospels' forgiving love: 'It is often assumed that such violence is found only in Revelation [the redemptive violence necessary to purge the world from its corruption, whilst clearing the way for the pure and perfect Kingdom] and that it contrasts radically with the Synoptic Gospels' message of tenderness, love, and forgiveness. Yet, while the tenderness, love, and forgiveness are indeed there and have inspired centuries of compassionate deeds, they are not the only message in the Gospels. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and man's foes will be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36); "So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Matthew 13:49-50); "And when you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famines; this is but the beginning of the sufferings" (Mark 13:7-8); "And brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death" (Mark 13:12).

Chapter IV: Millenarianism and Absolute Politics

Until the epochal 9/11 juncture, the consensus of opinion amongst Western academics, International Relations specialists, and policy-makers almost unanimously subscribed to the so-called 'secularization thesis', whose underlying principle posits that as the world's societies modernize the role played by religion in shaping their members' attitudes and actions would inevitably decrease. The ideological origins of the secularization thesis might be traced back to the cultural season of the Enlightenment: in the eyes of 17th and 18th century European intellectuals, the formation of a strong and centralized state required the forcible redefinition of religion as a personal matter, to be relegated to the newly emerging domain of the private, as opposed to public life. Seeking to limit social unrest and at the same time create a space for civic discourse, the political philosophy underpinning Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* and John Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* shared a common aspiration: religious beliefs, sentiments, and identities which might have 'consequences in action' must be divested from their political charge by their confinement behind an imaginary line drawn between the outside and the inner world. Scourging all Europe for more than a century, the Wars of Religion ensuing the Protestant Reformation proved such beliefs, sentiments, and identities capable of stirring uncontrollable sectarian passions and violence. Many intellectuals reached the conclusion that faith-based conflicts could be tackled not by enforcing religious uniformity on the members of the commonwealth - an expedient that never worked in a satisfactory manner, but rather by restricting the matters concerning the salvation of the soul within the *foro interno*: the contemplative realm of human interiority. Locke charged that individuals from different confessions could have coexisted in mutual tolerance, had the plurality of their values and interests been harmoniously organized according to a new moral rule based on rationality, of which the modern state would have represented the highest dignitary and guarantor. With the growth of a shared civil language steeped in balanced criticism, tolerance and common sense, the influence of religion on the public space was expected to wane, alleviating one of the primary causes of social conflict.¹

The assumption that an article of faith can and should be divested from its practical and political dimensions by the exercise of human rationality and by its re-conceptualization as a privately held and inconsequential matter of belief has often played an overlooked role in post-Enlightenment political philosophy

which continued in modern social sciences. Many contend that that idea also stands at the heart of Western culture, informing its self-understanding and frequently misconceived approaches to the rest of the world's civilisations.² Furthermore, divesting religion of its political dimension has no doubt prevented many Western policy-makers, diplomats and international agencies from making sense of the beliefs and practices of millions of non-Westerners who do not share secular assumptions about the place of religion in society. This shortcoming was at the basis of the US reactions to the Iranian events of 1979: as the Islamic revolution led by the Ayatollah Khomeini was unfolding, the only proposal made by the Central Intelligence Service (CIA) to investigate its religious dimension was vetoed on the ground that it would have amounted to a mere 'time-wasting' sociological enquiry deemed as 'politically irrelevant'. Quite tellingly, Terry Waite, the emissary of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Levant, being a religious man himself, was better able than any diplomat to understand the theo-political drives at play in the Iranian upheaval and to negotiate with their proponents at a serious level.³

The epistemological stand informing this study rests on an understanding that, given their all-encompassing nature, religious sentiments and worldviews can and often do produce tangible consequences. Paraphrasing Walter Benjamin, one might submit that religion relates to the political realm as ink relates to a blotting pad: the former can pervade the latter until saturation. Long before the high-jacked planes crashed into the Twin Towers, the secularization thesis had been significantly refuted by historical reality. As John R. Hall submits, since its emergence, secular Modernity could not end the salience of the sacred as a base of identity, solidarity and political engagement. That the contemporary *zeitgeist* brims with the most diverse and potent forms of religiosity imposes a redefinition of the theoretical-heuristic approaches towards human relations with the sacred central to the puzzle of secularizing Modernity.⁴

If, far from leading to its definitive decline, modernization processes are undoubtedly provoking a powerful resurgence of religion, it is worth stressing that this resurgence is not always negative. Today, many religiously motivated individuals and communities make important contributions to the public debate about a range of contested issues, conduct non-profit, charitable and relief work at home and abroad, administer state and local welfare programs and engage actively in peace-making and conflict resolution programmes. As previously explained, this study does not argue in favour of a 'pathologization'

of faith-based identities, discourses and practices, uncritically stigmatizing religion as the hotbed of sectarianism, intolerance and violence. Its main purpose is, rather, to raise awareness about the dangers inherent in a misconception or underestimation of its relevance and mobilizing force.

Religion can either provide a remarkable contribution towards the construction and maintenance of a given normative order – what Berger defined as the process of nomization; or supply the most powerful transcendental stimulus for its dissolution and reconstitution. From the perspective of the symbolization of social reality, observes Said Amir Arjomand, ‘the conservative and revolutionary aspects of religion, far from constituting an insoluble paradox, can be in fact seen as two sides of same coin’.⁵ Being embedded in the archetype of life-and-time-renovation, Millenarian ideals can easily motivate what Arjomand terms as ‘absolute politics’: a form of militant radicalism where no boundaries are set to human will and every aspect of the societal order is perceived as being transformable.⁶ The possibility of absolute politics also points to a scenario in which there is a perfect overlapping and complete merging between the two fundamental claimants to the organisation of collective life.⁷ All differences and boundaries between religion and politics dissolve because God himself or his appointed agents are the ones leading the revolutionary palingenesis of the evil and corrupt world. In the limited space of the following chapter, we will address the fundamental traits of Millenarian-Messianic consensus, and also cast light on the modalities by which this kind of consensus can be conducive to theopolitical mobilization. This will set the heuristic framework for our two case studies, Jewish Religious Zionism and US Christian Dispensationalism.

4.1 ‘Us’ versus ‘them’

The mobilizing force of the Millenarian appeal relies on its simplicity. The more unambiguous an idea, ‘the greater its radius of action will be and the more the public will flock to it’.⁸ Hunger for clarity is one of key psychological needs that must be appeased. To understand the present in Manichean terms coincides with a simplification of multifaceted social, political, and moral matters by a series of absolute antitheses. In order to exercise that basic discrimination between right and wrong, life’s inherent complexities must be forced into one of the two available categories. Dualism is therefore a profound

reductionism of the world, which requires a peculiar 'labour of classification' and, at the same, coercion:

Classifying consists in the act of inclusion and exclusion. Each act of naming splits the world into two: entities that answer to the name, and all the rest that do not. Certain entities may be included into a class - *made a class* - only in as far as other entities are excluded, left outside. Invariably, such operation of inclusion/exclusion is an act of violence perpetrated upon the world, and requires the support of a certain amount of coercion.⁹

Among the several Apocalyptic-Millennarian antinomies, the one differentiating in-group believers from out-group unbelievers prevails. The bi-partition of humanity into 'us' and 'them', righteous and reprobates, features in several Eschatological passages of the Bible, but acquires striking prominence in the graphic allegories of Revelation. The contrast is moral, and associated with the ideas of filth and cleanliness. The saints and martyrs who are supposed to enter the New Jerusalem are depicted in white, pure linens, whilst the fate of the reprobates is already stated in the defilement emanating from their sores and filthy clothes.¹⁰ So as to be included in the precinct of those who will be marvellously rewarded, it is essential to be 'pure', that is, to keep oneself free and distinct from the contaminating pollution of the wicked. In countless Millennarian congregations and sects, these 'Eschatological ethics' are to be implemented in the daily existence of the membership. With a series of distinctive prescriptions and prohibitions covering all areas of life, purity becomes a litmus test for group belonging. The closed and ordered community of the chosen is the soil in which virtues can flourish, whereas in the outside world vices and chaos proliferate like weeds.¹¹

Some of Millennialism's political potentialities may reside in this 'pencil sketch' dividing the world in 'us' and 'them'.¹² Carl Schmitt contended that the essential and original distinction to which every political motive and action should be reduced is that between 'friends' and 'enemies'. The more intense that original antithesis is, the more it can aggregate the community politically.¹³ Since their chiaroscuro understanding shuns half tints, reducing the river of human occurrences to conflicts, and the conflicts to Eschatological duels, radical forms of Millennarian activism may represent 'highest points' in politics. Nothing so unites a community [politically] as having a common enemy, an individual or corporate embodiment of Evil who might be held responsible for the current state of affairs. In keeping with many Millennarian beliefs, not only is the Antichrist prophesied to appear in the Last Days with the purpose of advancing Satan's cause, but also to have 'forerunners' in the present aeon.¹⁴

Every human association is necessarily a separation from and exclusion of 'others'. Yet, the negative pole of the binary provides an irreplaceable function. Consistent with such an identitary logic, Millenarian congregations are continuously defined not only by a simple opposition, but also by 'mimetic reciprocity' with what threateningly stands outside its boundaries - namely, the heathens marked by impurity and disbelief. A mirroring effect of this sort perfectly fits into Elias Canetti's scheme of 'double crowd':

The surest, and often the only, way by which a [human] crowd can preserve itself lies in the existence of a second crowd to which it is related. Whether the two crowds confront each other as rivals in a game, or as a serious threat to each other, the sight, or simply the powerful image of the second crowd, prevents the disintegration of the first.¹⁵

Projecting absolute evil onto an ontological enemy is a key identity-structuring symbolic practice. It brings unity and prevents the Millenarian community from disbanding. Further, it is in relation with 'antithetical others' that it becomes possible to anticipate the Judgement Day and take sides with the righteous. The corruption ascribed to the wicked confirms the chosen in their idealized self-image of purity. Existence, meaning and purpose of Millenarian movements seem to be ultimately dependent upon those supreme embodiments of evil they claim they will depose at the end of time.

4.2 Monism

Drawing significantly from the schemes of Zoroastrian Eschatology, Millenarianism endows its Manichean approach with temporal finalism. The doctrine of the twin 'principles' or 'roots' purposively develops along a linear, three-stage cosmic history: a past Golden Age, before the two principles mixed together undermining the primeval state of harmony; a present, middle phase of disunity and turmoil, in which the powers of light and darkness contend for ultimate control of the world; and a third, future age when harmony and perfection will be restored, by separating that which had become intermingled, followers of good and evil included.¹⁶ At the end, the world will be 'rehabilitated' to order as a result of a permanent victory over the forces of chaos: only one of the two principles will survive in the Millenarian Kingdom.¹⁷ Accordingly, the Millenarian outlook is both dualistic and monistic: 'dualistic in its view of the present, which it strives to overthrow; and monistic in its view of the future, which it strives to instantiate'.¹⁸

Following a cardinal principle of the Apocalyptic doctrine, Millenarianism denounces a 'radical disjunction' between the present order and that to come. This disjunction can be resolved only by collapsing 'the manifold variations of a plural world into two great categories, and then urging the victory of one and the annihilation of the other'.¹⁹ The Millennium is to be obtained by overthrowing the forces that are deemed to hold the present in bondage. As a great simplifier of reality, Millenarianism exposes sources of contradiction, compromise, and corruption, and, at the same time, promotes de-differentiation and homogeneity in the prevailing structures of social relations.²⁰ The progression towards salvation, under these premises, may thus turn into a withdrawal from otherness and plurality. In the third age of bliss, non-conformity is neither contemplated nor tolerated. Final fulfilment consists in humankind's deliverance into a 'crystallized age' of utter sameness. No further advancement or change can be envisioned after the middle phase of disunity and confusion is restored to harmony. The world's complexity, plurality and difference are phagocytised and cancelled out by one overwhelming pattern of order. It has been observed that, philosophically intended, the inception of the Millennium represents a 'vanishing point', a 'threshold beyond which nothing is true'.²¹ Human life exhausts all its dynamism because, by meeting and becoming infused with a single model of perfection and simulation, it is no longer able to differentiate itself from it.²² The happiness promised to the faithful after the End Time is happiness in stillness: 'a languid idleness that tastes of death'.²³

The Garden of Eden restored for the faithful at the end of history portrays the ideal of a conflict-free society: a pacified order without hierarchy, division, and inequality, where 'the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and leopard shall lie down with the kid' [Isaiah 11:6]. This image stands against present politics, which, to the Millenarians, is pathologically scourged by the ubiquity of chaos and conflict – both internally, as competition for power and resources, and externally, as rivalry with other communities. The final peace of the Millennium, reconciling all differences and discords into an undifferentiated whole, brings about the 'end of politics' as we know it: the articulation, confrontation and mediation of a plurality of interests and voices in the civil arena. In their common adversity to pluralism, Millenarianism and modern totalitarian thinking have been often equated. They divide humanity into two mutually exclusive halves, treating alterity and dissent as opponents.²⁴ Further, both mindsets, whilst claiming to act on behalf of the community's integrity, are

animated by a 'philosophy of oneness': a sole and exclusive truth, postulating 'a preordained, harmonious and perfect scheme of things, to which men are irresistibly driven, and at which they are bound to arrive'.²⁵ As the quest for absolute harmony entails the pursuit of absolute power so as to realize it,²⁶ the Millenarian dream of an egalitarian and pacified society, once implemented, is inherently prone to turn into a nightmare. For that dream to be fulfilled, historical reality and its unsettling complexities must be cut in pieces and forced into a utopian pattern of perfection:

Millenarian visions, in theory as well as in practice, remained largely akin to absolute power, a manifestation, so Millenarians tended to believe, of God's absolute might and glory transfused through the saviour to his community. At their apex, few Millenarian movements were hotbeds of democratic ideals, though in their post-Apocalyptic phase some nurtured a greater pluralistic outlook perhaps because of a diffused leadership. Others remained firmly committed to the original absolutist culture and even reinforced it. For the same basic reason most millenarian movements, at least in their climax, were not tolerant of the liberal ideals of religious tolerance and diversity. Nor were they all committed to a peaceful spreading of their message of salvation. The quest for expansion at various regional, national and international levels often propelled Millennial programmes for action into instances of vengeance and eradication of doctrinal enemies. Desperately imprisoned in the confines of their own convictions, Millenarians' dreams could easily turn into nightmares prescribed in the Apocalyptic literature.²⁷

Every modern society, whose civil arena may be characterized by 'the competitive struggle of organized, pluralist interests within the legal framework of democratic government'²⁸, contains in itself the premises of a Millenarian outburst. Especially when the institutional organs fail in mediating the conflict amongst the parts or the established frames of explanation are no longer able to account for a crisis of meaning, a 'great simplification' may acquire momentum, promising new meaning and orientation. Those in the society made uneasy by chaos, factionalism and otherness would turn to Millenarian regenerative solutions, in which an ordered whole is re-established and its enemies are defined out of existence once and for all. From this perspective, Millenarian beliefs and movements are not to be intended as extemporaneous phenomena stemming from lunatic fringes, but as ever present eventualities, sewn in the fabric of modern societies.²⁹

4.3 Charisma

According to several definitions and studies, charismatic leadership represents a quintessential feature of past and present Chiliastic movements. The notion of a numinous figure around whom the act of cosmic reconstruction

revolves can be traced back to Zoroastrian Eschatology. In the Avesta, the *Saoshyant* is a master of righteousness and miraculous powers, who conducts the armies of his human and angelic supporters in an End Time confrontation, culminating with the destruction of evil and the restoration of the primeval and lasting order.³⁰ That essential figure would become the prototype for saviours in other monotheistic faiths of Middle Eastern origin. Today, virtually every work about charismatic, prophetic, or messianic authority has been grounded in or influenced by Max Weber's 'typologies of power', which the German social scientist conceived and systematized in his analysis of world religions.³¹ Weber saw, especially in modern and secularized societies, the charismatic as a potential source of revolutionary breakthroughs: a prevailing but volatile drive, which arises in a moment of social-economic crisis or institutional breakdown; it fills the *vacuum* of legitimacy in the traditional or legal structures of power, by combining criticism of the old with the vision of the new. Focusing on the Greek etymology of the term (usually translated as 'gift given by God's grace'), Weber defined 'charisma' as a rare talent by virtue of which its holder is 'set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional qualities'. To be 'charismatic' implies being empowered by almost divine attributes, establishing the foundation of a spellbinding influence, which the leader may exert over single individuals or entire masses.³² In cases where his general plan is characterized by salvation, delivery or redemption of aggrieved communities, the 'charismatic hero' is thus not too dissimilar from the anointed one. He emerges in times of bewilderment or disruptive change, to restore a sense of purpose and vision for a future, which would otherwise remain indeterminate. His message of radical renewal and reversal of fortunes entices the disoriented, disenfranchised and voiceless, turning their present despair and indignity into glorified hope for the future.³³ That Weber recognizes in the biblical figures of Moses and Jesus of Nazareth its most paradigmatic 'ideal types' confirms for us that charismatic leadership would always overlap with the Judaic-Christian prophetic and Messianic matrix, even when it pursues secular and intra-historical redemptive plans.³⁴

Almost entirely omitted in Weber's theories, however, is an interest on the side of the followers, which resonate with the leader's numinous attributes and rally under his banner. If a leader is magnetic, then something about his following should be magnetisable.³⁵ Weber leaves out of the equation what perhaps represents the 'longest arc' in the circle establishing a charismatic bond.

This, rather than being exclusively the offspring of mystical qualities possessed by a single individual, is the outcome of interpersonal relations depending on recognition. Sociologically viewed, those who hold charismatic authority continue to do so only insofar as they receive legitimizing responses from their audiences. An approach aiming at illuminating charismatic phenomena should emphasize the relational bond between the leader and the led, merging the study of the special qualities of the former with that of the features, needs and orientation of the latter.³⁶ The same pattern should be kept in consideration when one investigates Millenarianism, perhaps the quintessential charismatic belief system. Past and present Chiliastic movements more often than not coalesce around a 'prophet', who articulates thought, aspirations and emotions, which the community 'can as yet only feel, strive towards and imagine but cannot put into words or translate explicitly into action'.³⁷ If much of Millenarian consensus is built upon the image of an order of things that transcends reality and breaks with the status quo, it is worth remembering that such an order does not yet exist. This is a key utopian feature that both religious and political charismatic leaderships share.³⁸ Not only must the present crisis be diffused by the promise of a future fulfilment, but also the lineaments of that fulfilment are to be anticipated in the present. So as to gather acolytes and mobilize their consent, it is necessary for the Millenarian prophet to render the contours of the new age 'visible' in his persona. In this sense, such a form of authority is strongly marked by a process of 'personalization' of power and legitimacy. A leader endowed with charisma operates as a 'focus of identification', by embodying in his flesh the same regenerative 'myth-dream' he projects outwards, on the community:

The Millenarian prophet personifies the myth-dream, and is the channel through which the contents of the myth-dream may be realized. He it is who articulates the myth-dream; whose activities nourish and refine the content of the myth-dream; who stands for the new man. (...) In a certain sense, if only temporarily, such a charismatic figure - a single individual - *is* the myth-dream.³⁹

Historical evidence suggests that, in particular circumstances, the more heavily his message is burdened with chimerical and unrealistic pledges, the greater likelihood the Millenarian prophet has of creating a resonance within an audience. Yet, in spite of the remarkable appeal that lies at the heart of the Millenarian myth-dream, commitment and loyalty to prophet are not unconditionally granted in light of his supernatural gifts. They rather depend on the prophet's performance, whose outcomes are accurately weighed by

believers and followers, according to 'subjectively rational' criteria and expectations. In its pure form, charismatic authority is extremely hard to sustain since the personalisation of power at its core imposes a single criterion of accountability: that centred on the consistency of the prophet's statements against the rule of evidence.⁴⁰ His legitimacy may stand or evaporate as the myth-dream of salvation he advocates is tested and judged against reality. In particular, the date setting for the final consummation and the beginning of the *Millennium* has always represented a critical decision for the Millenarian prophet to take. On the one hand, his 'charismatic aura' may be momentarily emboldened, given the atmosphere of miraculous anticipation that such a decision would create within the community. But, on the other, a precise time for the Apocalyptic breakthrough would also expose his prophetic status to drastic disconfirmation, eventually leading to the immediate withdrawal of legitimating group consensus. Despite the always-proclaimed imminence of the end of the world, the threat of fixing its specific date is so daunting that Millenarian prophets are generally very reluctant to invest in it.⁴¹

Underlying all Millenarian movements - and, more generally, all forms of charismatic authority - is an inherent ambivalence: in order to attain stability, duration and political effectiveness, these religious organizations have to come to terms with the volatility deriving from their Apocalyptic longing to revolutionize the world order. In other words, some sort of 'institutionalization' is required:

Charismatic authority is religious or revolutionary. It emerges in response to social crisis or a perception of social crisis. When legitimacy is called into question, the charismatic leader is a new source of legitimacy. There are no rules, but to persist the charismatic authority must transform itself or must create a new structure of rules.⁴²

The other side of the coin, however, consists in that 'if the routinisation processes increase, the original charisma' - that is, one the defining features of Millenarianism - 'is lost and what is left is an over-elaborate organization or bureaucracy that tends to be self-perpetuating'.⁴³ The Millenarian prophet's key operational task would precisely be that of routinizing his authority without drastically hindering the charismatic side of it.⁴⁴

4.4 Palingenesis

Palingenesis represents a 'paradigmatic myth' of renewal and regeneration, which manifests itself under countless cultural guises, but acquires an explicit role within the Apocalyptic-Millenarian discourse. The meaning and bearing of this myth can be etymologically deduced from the 'semantic construction' of the word 'palin-genesis':

Palingenesis is derived from the Greek verb *gennaō* (active: 'to give birth to'; passive: 'to be born') and the adverb *palin* ('again, once more'). Consequently, the term palingenesis is etymologically related to the idea of rebirth. The significance of the word, therefore, arises from the metaphor contained within it. Palingenesis refers to a spiritual rebirth, regeneration, revitalization, the transaction that brings the believer into intimate relationship with God and its attributes.⁴⁵

In mainstream Christian traditions, the symbolism of palingenesis pervades the theme of Jesus' Resurrection and the Pauline writings. With regards to Catholicism, images of new birth and spiritual regeneration also inform the sacramental rite of Baptism and that of Holy Communion. However, the idea of palingenesis is Biblically traceable to John 3:3-7, a passage where Jesus tells an enquirer - a Pharisee called Nicodemus - that he must be 'born anew' before entering into the Kingdom of God.⁴⁶ In some contemporary Evangelical denominations and churches, such a precept receives much attention in connection to rituals of charismatic renewal. Here, the experience of being 'born again' appears to be grounded on a cathartic process replicating that Apocalyptic template in which a new beginning follows a period of crisis and decadence. Before salvation can be attained in a novel existential stage, the believer must repudiate his or her previous background by means of a ritual dramatization, which may possibly assume a traumatic pitch. The 'sinner' is purposively launched into a conscious re-enactment and consideration of the past sinful lifestyle. A full descent into evil and degeneracy is staged in order to cleanse the believer's soul and reach God's forgiveness. Hence, the individual, who was considered 'morally dead' before accepting Jesus as a beacon, can be regenerated, that is, brought into a new and qualitatively different life.⁴⁷

As repeatedly mentioned, the Millenarian pattern is constructed, in its infinite variations, along a similar palingenetic plot, where a phase of general decay, anomie and turmoil culminating in a final catastrophe is understood as the herald of a new dawn of perfection and harmony. As myth, palingenesis bestows a major mobilizing force on Millenarianism since at its core lies the conviction that

contemporaries are living through or about to live through a sea change, watershed, or turning point in the historical process. The perceived corruption, anarchy, oppressiveness, iniquities or decadence of the present, rather than being seen as immutable and thus to be endured indefinitely with stoic courage or bleak pessimism, are perceived as having reached their peak and interpreted as a sure sign that one era is nearing its end and a new order is about to emerge.⁴⁸

Embracing the conceptual framework that the historian of ideas Roger Griffin introduced in the realm of Social and Political Sciences, a Millenarian movement might be categorized, especially in its constitutive stages, as a 'palingenetic community'.⁴⁹ Griffin contends that, in moments of systemic crisis, 'a spontaneous palingenetic community may emerge and be based on that peculiar symbiosis between the official palingenetic vision and longings from below to participate in the process of renewal and regeneration'.⁵⁰ In other words, that community of belief would take form by means of a synergic encounter between a 'demand' and an 'offer' of orientation, sense and, foremost, existential regeneration. On the one hand, an audience would project its expectations of renewal onto 'a movement that offers a comprehensive diagnosis of the current crisis, and presents the revolution it has undertaken as a panacea of its ills'.⁵¹ On the other, the palingenetic vision would find a 'resonance' not in the entire population, but only in those of its strata, which are particularly receptive to that sort of appeal.⁵² In line with Griffin's views, Millenarian consensus should be considered as the outcome not of brainwashing or exploited passivity, but rather as an authentic identification with the myth of re-birth.⁵³

The idea of palingenetic community offers a valuable starting point for a necessary revision and re-conceptualization of traditional paradigms of consent and legitimacy, which may acquire particular purchase on our analysis of Millenarian beliefs and activities. According to the criteria informing the pseudo-scientific *Weltanschauung* of both Behavioural Sciences and liberal democracies, consensus and legitimation process are conventionally based on the principles of 'rational choice': individual decision would therefore rely on gradualism, compromise, and, most of all, pondered calculus between costs and benefits.⁵⁴ Within a framework of understanding assigning to the idea of rational choice the main and exclusive responsibility for the pursuit of self-interest, a Millenarian movement cannot help being mapped as an exemplary case of 'anti-culture', or, in Griffin's words, a 'grotesque parody of the real article'.⁵⁵ On the part of the leaders, Millenarian consensus would be deemed as depending on deception, anaesthetization or cynical manipulation of believers'

genuine feelings. Whereas, on the part of the followers, the decision to embrace and hold that belief system would be seen as a consequence of fear, impulsiveness, or anxiety: counterproductive emotions that, by blurring the faculty of sound reasoning, would inevitably lead individuals to behaviours that are out of keeping with self-interest.⁵⁶ In light of such unwarranted heuristics, the traditional paradigms never stopped reading and stigmatizing Millenarianism ideologically - that is, through the lens of that stereotypical contrast opposing the 'genuine' consensus of open, pluralistic societies, endowed with reason, and the 'coerced and manufactured' consensus of Millenarian congregations, cultic milieus set apart and opposing any movement towards freedom and intellectual emancipation.⁵⁷ This view would not only perpetuate the same Manichean attitude distinguishing Millenarianism, but also fall short in comprehending key elements at the heart of its longstanding appeal. Millenarians are neither passive dupes of an oppressive system nor members of a lunatic fringe, but individuals who are actively and imaginatively engaged with cultural patterns that are directly related to their everyday lives. They use Apocalyptic-Millenarian symbolism as a prism to analyse and interpret reality. This means that whoever wishes to investigate Millenarianism should address that level of imagination in which what is conventionally recognized as 'irrational' represents *per se* a driving force, impacting on both consent and legitimation processes. The meaning and persuasiveness of that force - that is, its form of received 'rationality' - are grounded on the 'pars construens' of its mythic structure. Palingenetic movements are not simply bound to destroy a genuine social political culture, but to transform it in order to realize the utopian vision of a re-born society based on a new type of human being.⁵⁸ As a vision of re-birth and regeneration out of chaos, the Millenarian myth fully satisfies the criteria of human self-interest.

4.5 Pre- and postmillennialism

The teaching of the final kingdom confronts theologians and believers as one of the most controversial hermeneutical matters. Over the centuries, attempts to relate key Apocalyptic passages, such as those contained in Daniel or John's Revelation, to the historical course generated countless different approaches to the pursuit of the Millennium. From the Nineteenth century onwards, two 'almost-normative' ideal types nonetheless emerged, amongst theologians and scholars, so as to give reason to Christian Chiliasm and to its various

sociological manifestations: 'premillennialism' and 'postmillennialism'. As the suffixes 'pre' and 'post' might already suggest, such explanatory categories primarily discriminate in light of the Second Coming's temporal position. The former holds that Christ's physical return would precede and actually inaugurate the thousand-year period of peace, bliss, and holiness; whereas the latter advocates a hermeneutics in which the Parousia follows the Millennium, as its expected outcome.⁵⁹ Considered as articles of faith, both outlooks express confidence in that providential design deterministically aiming at the attainment of a final state of perfection and harmony. Yet, viewing Christ's glorious re-appearance as the initiating cause or the direct consequence of the Millennium entails an entirely different theological *Weltanschauung*, namely about the mode of accomplishment of that ultimate state.

Premillennialism represents the historically predominant and most commonly studied pattern of religious Chiliasm. Being embedded in a literal understanding of Revelation 20-21, its interpretative frame faithfully reproduces Apocalypticism's original rationales, first of all its inherent pessimism and sense of impending doom. Premillennial prophecies always read the current situation as 'beyond repair'. The Messianic fulfilment must be preceded by rising turmoil and tribulation: 'the birth pangs' in which evil temporarily prevails and humanity touches its lowest ebb. Great apostasy, wars, famines, earthquakes, and the tyrannical stronghold of the Antichrist are the 'signs and wonders', assuring the faithful about the imminence of Christ's Kingdom. According the premillennial master plot, this reign, rather than being established by human endeavour, is supposed to come about as a result of God's sudden and overwhelming intervention: a purifying fire that destroys what is unredeemable by men, rectifying and regenerating it into a new level of existence. The Millennium initiated by the Parousia represents an intermediate and limited phase of terrestrial felicity and peace, which is geographically circumscribed to the sacred perimeter developing from that *axis mundi* represented by the Temple of Jerusalem. In such a Paradise regained, the firstly-resurrected 'saints' - an elitist group of believers who suffered martyrdom as a result of their unwavering faith - will have, under the dominion of Christ, exclusive residence. During this blessed age lasting one thousand years, Satan and his emissaries, however, do not cease to exist, nor are they necessarily decreased in number. They are temporarily held in check, kept sealed inside bottomless pit by Christ's rod-of-iron rule. At the end of the Millennium, the forces of evil will be loosed from that imprisonment 'for a short time', to break

out, with the auxiliary armies of Gog and Magog, in a last, but unsuccessful assault on the saints and the Holy City: the battle of Armageddon. After the definitive cosmic victory over Satan, a second resurrection would summon forth 'the dead, great and small' for the Last Judgment. Those whose name is 'not found written in the book of life' will be sentenced to 'the second death' and cast into a lake of everlasting fire. The premillennial ordeal concludes felicitously for the righteous: once evil and death, that is, mankind's foremost enemies, are permanently subdued, 'a New Heaven and a New Earth' would descend from heaven, so that 'the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God' [Rev 21: 1-3].⁶⁰

To summarize: premillennialism is embedded in a tragic reading of the structures time, placing the End as imminent, predestined and catastrophic.⁶¹ The present situation is understood as not amendable by human agency because wholly dominated by demonic powers. Only a divine intervention can put such degeneration straight. God will soon close history out by a cosmic ordeal and bring the earth and its inhabitants to final judgement. Taking into consideration its emphasis on God's full sovereignty over human life and fate, inherent individual and societal sinfulness, sense of predestination and election, premillennialism might be seen as the natural ancillary to Calvinism – a theological doctrine according to which God foreordained the course of history, prophecy revealed an unalterable future of degeneration and disintegration, society and human soul are not subject to reform, salvation would be entirely contingent upon 'divine grace' and hence beneficial to a limited group of chosen.⁶² Postmillennialism, on the other hand, maintains the Apocalyptic doctrine's defining goal (perfection and harmony at the end). Yet, it breaks away and discredits the catastrophic modes of its accomplishment. The Millenarian Kingdom is no longer a sudden and violent breach into the absolute deficiency of history, but the outcome of a progressive and evolutionary development, which necessitates history as its primary *medium*. Put differently, the world as we know it cannot be annihilated by an Apocalyptic fire since it represents the privileged channel through which the divine providence redeems mankind, by leading its spiritual and material advance.⁶³ In the postmillennial reading, the perfectibility of the individual soul and that of the societal order are intertwined targets, whose attainment largely depends on the Christian community's reforming zeal - and not upon the will of an interventionist God. Christ's final re-appearance is the 'crown' placed on

humankind's head, the end result of a longstanding and unwavering involvement in working out its own salvation:

Postmillennialism is that view of the Last Things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world eventually is to be Christianized and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the Millennium. The Second Coming will be followed immediately by the general resurrection and that final judgement, which introduces heaven or hell in its fullness. The millennium to which postmillennialists look forward is thus the Golden Age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation, that is, during the present age. This has to be brought about through the forces now active in the world. It has to last an indefinitely long period of time, perhaps much longer than a literal one thousand year. The changed character of individuals will be reflected in an uplifted social, economic, political and cultural life of mankind. (...) Evil in all its many forms will be reduced to negligible proportions, that Christian principles will be the rule, not the exception, and that Christ will return to a truly Christianized world. (...) The redemption of the world is a long and slow process, extending through the centuries, yet surely approaching. We live in a day of advancing victory although there are many apparent setbacks. Periods of spiritual advance and prosperity alternate with periods of spiritual decline and depression. But as one age succeeds another there is progress.⁶⁴

On postmillennial principles, the period of peace and prosperity depicted in Revelation 20 is intended as a mere extension of the current historical dispensation, and therefore not essentially different from it. The present stage would eventually merge with and disappear in the Millennium, as an increasing proportion of the world's inhabitants is exposed to and converted by Christian teachings.⁶⁵ The Millenarian Kingdom is not interpreted as Christ's personal and earthly rule in Jerusalem, but as the general awakening of society to the divine. It is further held that the universal proclamation of the Gospel - that is, 'witnessing to the nations' in the present dispensation, and under the Holy Spirit's inspiration - is a normative precept stemming from Christ Himself [Mat 28:18-20].⁶⁶ Consistent with this hermeneutical approach, any literal understanding of prophecies predicting an impending cataclysm is downplayed in favour of a more allegorical interpretation. Advocating duration over disruption, postmillennialists endow established religious institutions with meaning and authority. The Church, with its set of codified dogmas, sacraments, and practices, assumes a key role in supervising and directing the believers' effort to reform and cleanse society in preparation for Christ's return. Evil and sin, however, will never be fully eradicated from this world: insofar as Christian righteousness heightens, they will be reduced to a risible minimum. Postmillennial reading contrasts the theological tenets of strict predestination and God's omnipotent control with optimistic confidence in man's free will⁶⁷ –

most notably, his ability to bring about lasting social progress, fence off evil's tide, proselytize and convert the masses. Given the scale of the spiritual advancement envisaged, that is, the extent to which the world would be Christianized, salvation is deemed to lose much of its elitist character and become an almost universal privilege.⁶⁸

4.6 Apocalyptic and Naturalistic Messianism

Over the centuries, no other subject has been more divisive and controversial in Judaism than defining the Messianic ideal and its modes of realization. The most common disagreements occur around key issues such as assessing human and divine prerogatives in the advancement of redemption, whether the final era will become manifest gradually or break forth all at once through a wondrous transformation, and the identity and role of the Messiah as a saviour of Israel.⁶⁹ Another critical matter of debate is the relationship between present reality and the ultimate Messianic promise. Divergent theological conceptions have been often systematized through two overarching ideal types: Apocalyptic and Naturalistic Messianism.⁷⁰ These two ideal types reflect sharply divergent perceptions of historical reality, but, in turn, can shape believers' attitudes toward the outer world and, eventually, determine their withdrawal or involvement in it. The Apocalyptic-Naturalistic classification is informed by criteria similar but not analogous to those differentiating premillennial attitudes from postmillennial ones. It is therefore necessary to unpack these two Jewish redemptive patterns.

Not only is Apocalyptic Messianism strictly incumbent upon miraculous and supernatural fiat, but also requires 'a profound transformation of the cosmos, amounting to its very demolition and reconstruction'. Apocalyptic Messianism is embedded in a literal hermeneutic of the Biblical, Talmudic and *Midrashic* sources prophesising the Day of the Lord: a final moment of reckoning, judgement and reprisal against the heathen nations, an act of divine retribution for the suffering they caused upon the righteous Jews.⁷¹ This approach, revealing the same pessimist stance of premillennialism, despairs about the potential to bring salvation to the Chosen in this age, and instead invest all its hope in the next to come. Apocalyptic Messianism posits

a visionary anticipation of Divine upheaval: an abrupt supernatural transformation of the existing political-religious order, which brings instant glory to Israel's faithful and destruction upon her enemies. Extraordinary transmutations of nature accompany the termination and supersession of the

historical process. (...) The Apocalyptic view puts no stock in the possibility of the rectification, within the historical context. (...) This Messianic position sees the inimical forces at play in the human drama it confronts, both within the community and without, as intractable. Jewry will not redeem itself collectively through resourceful effort. (...) The direct providential manipulation of events is clear, reflected in the depiction of both hero and villain as fated characters in a predetermined Divine script. Indicative of the Apocalyptic Eschatological genre is the simplicity of its typology. Evil at the ultimate moment is instantly vanquished. The sinful of Israel will perish along with the wicked of the nations, whereas the righteous will survive in the perfection of their virtue.⁷²

The Apocalyptic reading emerges and thrives in moments of utter despair. Present reality is antithetical to the Messianic ideal. The sense of impotence is so overwhelming, that any attempt at intra-historical rectification is seen as futile. Consolation is rather provided by those visionary passages in the Jewish Apocalyptic texts anticipating the catastrophic renewal of the cosmos, and the summary destruction of evil on an imminent Judgment Day.⁷³ The perfect unity of the redeemed world will come into being all at once, through divine intercession at the End of Days, transfiguring the current eon into a qualitatively different one. Before being regenerated, the present state of affairs must reach its lowest ebb.⁷⁴ In a sense the crisis is welcomed in its extreme consequences, as the birth pangs are the necessary interlude hailing the shift from historical deficiency to transcendental fulfilment. In light of this Apocalyptic caesura, there cannot be direct continuity between the present and the next age: 'before the Messiah manifests himself, the weeding out of being in the world will take place, for every new being is the ruin of the being preceding it and only then [with the ruin of the old] will the new being begin'.⁷⁵ Directly from this understanding of the Messianic promise stems the passive and detached stand believers adopt towards reality. When faith in divine intervention supersedes human initiative, there is no cause and effect nexus linking material effort and forthcoming result.⁷⁶ Despite maintaining a 'threshold involvement in life's exigencies'⁷⁷, those who subscribe to the Apocalyptic school, and thus await passively the 'coming of the Mashiah', are either oblivious or indifferent towards what happens outside their enclave. The secular society at large, with its corrupted political, economic and cultural life, is meaningless and soon will vanish.

Traditional rabbinic sources purport that atonement - repentance through strict observance of the Torah and its commandments - represents the only 'active task' that the pious Jew might embark on so as to solicit God's resolute intercession within the fabric of history. Complete earthly redemption is preceded by complete repentance. In the vocabulary of Apocalyptic

Messianism, repentance and redemption are therefore synonymous: when Jews return to God and His Law, God returns to the Jews. Although salvation will come after each and every Jew has accepted the Torah as a spiritual guide, the timing of the final realization [marked by the end of the Exile, the ingathering of the Diaspora, and the establishment of a Jewish national home in Eretz Ysrael] remains entirely dependant on the all determining and providential divine hand.

In contrast to the Apocalyptic supersession stands the historical valorisation undergirding the Naturalistic view. This mode belittles the assumption that a catastrophic ending sparked by divine intervention represents the sole and necessary route towards fulfilment. Rather than on its collapse, the Messianic Age is believed to materialize within the present dispensation. On Naturalist principles, salvation is no longer a sudden twist towards the transcendental realm (a twist that comes out of the depths or in the wake of a crisis), but the outcome of a gradual and earthly process of repair. Further, the pious Jews are invited to play a dynamic role in the pursuit of the Messianic end. Through their mundane commitment to the cause of *Eretz Ysrael*, they can step-by-step advance what God will eventually complete. Aviezer Ravitzky argues that the political potential inherent in the Naturalistic outlook stems from differentiating between the redemptive process and its final goal:

A clear distinction is drawn between the Messianic process, which is a concrete historical development, and the Messianic goal, a utopia that transcends history. Although redemption moves forward along a natural, human course - the gradual ingathering of the exiles and resettlement of the Land - it is to be completed with a miraculous divine revelation that bursts beyond the boundaries of both man and nature. This distinction between the ongoing process and the final goal allows the believer to regard the present as an open field for mundane human activity and voluntary communal initiative, and it sparks a decidedly activist element within the traditional Messianic faith. (...) The sharp differentiation between the historical act and the Utopian goal effectively brought about a religious 'shift of values': the act of earthly building - the creation of a firm material infrastructure in the Land of Israel - assumed an immediate urgency, taking precedence over other spiritual and social tasks: 'For when we redeem the land on earth, so shall the horn of salvation spring up from heaven'.⁷⁸

On Naturalistic grounds, the Messianic Age is therefore the 'crowning achievement' of resourceful and down-to-earth initiative on part of the Jewish people. A decidedly optimistic stand towards historical events replaces the Apocalyptic tone of doom. History can no longer be shattered, uprooted or abolished. By necessity, the Messianic process maintains an organic link to history, being the latter its privileged channel of accomplishment.⁷⁹ The natural

outcome of this progressive and intra-historical view consists in blurring mundane means with transcendental ends. Within the Apocalyptic mode the contrast between the current dispensation and the one to come is remarkably stark, whereas in the Naturalist mode that contrast tends to fade. With the advancement of redemption, history gradually merges into the Messianic Age.

4.7 An *Eschaton* beyond reach

It has been repeatedly argued that meaning, as a symbolic construction, tames what appears as incomprehensible with a plausible answer, transmutes chaos into a configuration of order, and orients actions towards 'objects of devotion' - focal points which integrate human energies in one direction. In so doing, meaning endows suffering with a purpose and, at the same time, curtails that feeling of powerlessness and insecurity that constantly haunts the most helpless and frail of all creatures. The assertion 'it must have meaning' is therefore the quintessential cultural antidote to that existential imbalance, ceaselessly pushing 'the not-yet finished animal' into the quest for new and, if possible, better equilibrium. On premillennial principles, which reprise the cardinal rationales of Apocalypticism, that quest points towards an extramundane dimension. The current age is perceived as utterly meaningless and thus is consigned to annihilation by divine fiat. Meaning is expected out of a cosmic upheaval, which shatters the world so as to renew it into a state of celestial perfection. Postmillennial logic, on the other hand, is based on a process of 'historicization' of the Apocalypse's earliest precepts. By aiming at a state of ultimate equilibrium, postmillennialism envisions the same kind of renewal, but pursues such a goal, first and foremost, within the fabric of the present dispensation. The flow of history cannot be abruptly abolished since it represents the temporal dimension through which, under the divine providence's lead, meaning is created out of spiritually inspired human action. If premillennialism offers a fulfilment that is both immediate and catastrophic, the postmillennial plan for salvation rests on a linear, continuous, and onward looking movement towards homeostasis. Yet, that final stage of equilibrium relentlessly recedes as it is approached:

[Premillennialism] dangles the Messianic Kingdom – the end of war and poverty, the attainment of earthly bliss, the certainty of divine Truth, the vindication of the righteous, and the punishment of the unjust – as a sort of carrot before humanity. The history of [premillennial] interpretation is a series of attempts to declare, with tragic finality, that the millennial carrot is within our grasp.

Postmillennialism, on the other hand, places that carrot perpetually just beyond human reach. Millenarian perfection is never absolutely achievable within history, and can at best be approximated through the humility that follows from measuring one's fallible self against an absolute divine standard. (...) Perfection seems to be achievable if only people would try just a little bit harder and have just enough faith. While premillennialism claims possession of the object of pursuit, postmillennialism offers a goal that recedes even as it is pursued – and harnesses this pursuit as an engine of social change.⁸⁰

By indefinitely postponing the Messianic Age to a distant and unforeseeable future, postmillennialism aspires to the *Eschaton* 'asymptotically', that is, by a process of incremental approximation to a final act, which, almost by assumption, cannot ever be attained: 'the carrot is perpetually just beyond human reach'. Paradoxically, it is this impossibility to achieve the arch-utopian reign of God to spur human zeal in preparing its advent, by reforming and improving the world according to Christian values. On postmillenarian principles, the historical transition from deficiency to fulfilment turns to matter more than the absolute goal towards which that transition moves. Many contend that, once entirely historicized, the paradox inscribed in the postmillennial Eschatology would represent the ideological backbone of the myth of progress: a secular idea of developmental growth, whose dictum 'more than yesterday and less than tomorrow' portrays the faith in an irreversible historical trajectory towards harmony and perfection, in which humans have a purposive and creative role. That trajectory, made of a set of gradual, inevitable steps towards a secular heaven, is distinctively intra-historical and without an end.⁸¹

Something similar can be convincingly argued in regards to the Jewish Messianic counterpart. The Naturalistic mode removes the Apocalyptic 'sting' from the redemptive process. Once advanced intra-historically and through human agency, this process takes precedence over the expectation for the Messiah as a personal saviour – the anointed king from Davidic lineage who, at the End Days, will be sent by God to establish a Jewish national rule in Eretz Ysrael, distinguished by justice, prosperity, and righteousness. The Naturalistic mode, argues Ravitzky, represents a paradoxical form of Messianism without the Messiah. It is not the Messiah who will bring about the miraculous outbreak ushering in the age of perfection and bliss, but, on the contrary, it is the redemptive process, set in motion and promoted by the faithful in the present dispensation, that will give birth to the Messiah:

Clearly, the Messiah is merely a metaphor for the Messianic idea and the Messianic age. A personal messiah will certainly come but, contrary to the

common conception, it is not he who will bring about the historic turn, nor will he, with his own hands, set in motion the redemptive process. On the contrary, this turn and this process will give birth to him. The Messiah is not involved in the *at-halta de-ge'ulah*, the beginning of redemption; He is not responsible for the planting and growth of the fruit, but rather for its ripening.⁸²

History being the privileged channel for the Naturalistic consummation of redemption, its abrogation can hardly be imagined, even when that process reaches its culmination. The Messianic age is often portrayed by many Talmudic sources as a mere continuation of the historical aeon, although on qualitatively improved level of existence. Put differently, within the Naturalist understanding of redemption, the messianic era leaves history as open-ended as ever. The boundaries between the mundane and extra-mundane are extremely blurred, and sometimes the dimensions lie along the same continuum.

4.8 A creative tension

Calling for 'a more readily understandable terminology' so as 'to enhance clarity of communication between scholars, and between scholars and the general public', Catherine Wessinger recently recommended replacing the received, but 'obscure' distinction pre- versus postmillennialism with that opposing *catastrophic* to *progressive* millennialism. According to Wessinger, the primary definitional emphasis should be posed, rather than on the time of Christ's return, on the expectation of how the chiliastic kingdom will be accomplished: the catastrophic mode underscores the necessity of a tragic denouement as prelude of the post-historical phase posited as perfect, whereas, according to the progressive mode, that phase would arrive gradually by means of human cooperation with the divine (or superhuman) will. By detaching Millenarianism from its initial theological moorings, in particular from the Second Advent's timing, such a definition should also broaden the analytical spectrum towards the inclusion of secular and non-Christian manifestations - especially those based on a cyclical rather than linear temporality.⁸³ Yet, despite her effort to deepen the debate surrounding the subject, Wessinger seems to alter the terminology, but not the substance of it. The distinctive features of the newly devised analytical categories 'catastrophic' and 'progressive' reproduce, without significant addition, those articulating the classic, religiously-embedded, differentiation pre- versus postmillennialism.⁸⁴

One general point should at least be clear: the boundaries of Millenarianism's different guises are no doubt more complicated and blurred than any classification might ever acknowledge. As interpretative devices sharing the same faith in a final stage of perfection, bliss and prosperity, the two paradigmatic patterns cannot be mutually exclusive. They rather tend to stand in a sort of creative tension, and, under certain circumstances, might also exchange, overlap, or combine many of their respective symbolic resources.⁸⁵ The catastrophic and progressive modes, observes Wessinger, can be visualized as the two polarities on a continuum of ever-shifting Eschatological attitudes, which, over time, constantly respond and adjust to historical circumstances or other various external factors.⁸⁶ Not only can Millenarian-Messianic ideas shape events by influencing human perception and action, but also events, once filtered by human perception, might alter such ideals of ultimate religious fulfilment.⁸⁷ On the one hand, a period of socio-political unrest, an economic breakdown or, more generally, an anomic crisis may alienate a postmillennial-Naturalist attitude from its distinctive optimism and simultaneously generate amongst believers a shift towards a more catastrophic stance: the Apocalyptic prism might gain momentum as the most effective rhetorical remedy, because it is capable of endowing unsettling feelings of impending doom and anomie with ultimate meaning. On the other, an epoch of general stability, economic growth, or scientific discoveries and technological invention may prompt the re-evaluation of human civilization within the present historical aeon, and therefore diffuse those facilitating circumstances amongst which Apocalypticism usually thrives. The argument that society and humankind are beyond repair and that the old must be catastrophically swept away, losing much of its plausibility, might as well be replaced by a more progressive reading.⁸⁸ As a venerable symbolic pattern to reach unity of meaning out of chaos, the Millenarian-Messianic tropes over the centuries display remarkable chameleonic skills. Their adaptive stratagems, O'Leary reminds us, are countless, and not susceptible to negation through rational criticism.⁸⁹

For our purposes it is worth stressing that, although compatible with quietistic attitudes, the Apocalyptic worldviews have revealed themselves as particularly well-suited for moments of 'revolutionary liminality': moments in which neither boundaries nor limits are set to human enterprise and all aspects of the social and normative order [the *nomos*] are perceived as transformable through militant activism.⁹⁰ On such an understanding, having reached a crucial point in history, the current state of affairs can no longer be identified

with the received structures of meaning and authority. But it requires a radical break aiming at complete destruction and reconstruction of the *status quo*. Christian Millenarianism and Jewish Messianism, as belief systems, might generate a substantial stimulus to what has been defined as 'absolute politics': an active involvement into a God-led revolution to redefine society.⁹¹

4.9 Forcing the End

In the Biblical passages serving as basis for the formulation of the Messianic or Millenarian ideal, it is nowhere stated that salvation might rely upon human initiative. In the Jewish tradition, many are the warnings and injunctions against human speculation, let alone undertaking, aimed at the accomplishment of the ultimate age. An angel exhorts the author of the Book of Ezra not to dare 'to hasten more than the Creator' [4:34]. The Jesus recounted in the Gospels seems to endorse a similar stance: despite announcing the Kingdom's arrival as imminent, He repeatedly warns His followers to neither set a date for it nor speed up its advent.⁹² This notwithstanding, the enticement to action, the call for a man-led fulfilment is part and parcel of countless Chiliastic movements. Since the age of eternal bliss and perfection has been promised at the end of time, many thought possible to 'short-circuit' the Messiah, bringing forward that goal. The final dénouement was to be induced, given the entity of the emotional investment: had the prophesied transfiguration failed to materialize, the believers' hopes and primary identitary focus would have revealed their illusory nature.⁹³ Any human attempt to make God face His responsibilities, those lying beyond the end of history, is nevertheless doomed to failure because none proved capable of such an action. Ironically enough, the transformative charge of the Apocalypse resides by and large in that fiasco announced beforehand. By virtue of its intensity and pervasiveness, the call to realize the unrealizable is at the highest degree 'political'. It draws the faithful together, making them cling to their own expectations so tightly that they might become willing to kill or die for them.⁹⁴

The deep cleavage of opinions with regard to the possibility of forcing the End reflects the unsolvable theological dispute about the mutually limiting relationship between the principles of divine omnipotence, omniscience, and predetermination and the scope of human free will. The militant character of Chiliastic movements can hardly be reconciled with the idea of a deterministically ordained course of history. Common sense would in fact

suggest that it is neither necessary nor worthwhile to intervene in order to hasten the End, if this already represents a comic necessity whose materialization is most of the times perceived as imminent. Even so, historical evidence shows that the belief in a necessary and impending Messianic or Millenarian transfiguration can either go hand in hand with passivity or, quite the contrary, serve to overcome inhibitions and spur activism:

Those who believe they know the future want to be the first to announce it. They want to appear as the vanguard leading the march to the drumbeat of history. They want to be part of the flow and to help it towards its destined goal. Whatever their social or numeric weight, they see themselves as playing a central role in the unfolding of events. We should not therefore identify the belief in historical necessity with fatalism and passivity. One that has deciphered the secret, redemptive direction of history has no fear of failure. One feels called upon into the breach, to take matters in hand, to press onwards, to join the wave of the future.⁹⁵

On this view, it is not the believers who are forcing the End, but rather it is the End than impinges on them, forcing their actions towards a new beginning. Believers cut the 'Gordian knot' concerning the exact balance between divine and human prerogatives by purporting that God called upon them to intervene on the historical plane. In other words, human intensified activism to advance the redemptive process becomes valid and legitimate inasmuch as it is presented as emanating directly from a divine source. Conversely, critics or cautionary voices respond to that claim by arguing that whoever appropriates the *vox dei* in such a fashion does not engage in transcendental matters, but rather plays politics and power: what is in reality affirmed in hastening more than the Creator is 'the supremacy of the human will, unwittingly following the madman in Nietzsche's story who proclaimed the Death of God'.⁹⁶

Every hierocratic authority seeking to establish or maintain itself intra-historically must inevitably limit, neutralize or harness in its favour the destabilizing appeal the palingenetic myth exerts over the masses of faithful. Many and different are the strategies that orthodox Judaism, Christianity and Islam have deployed over the centuries in order to 'de-eschatologize' Apocalyptic tropes and symbols belonging to their respective canons or traditions. In light of the brutal suppressions and retaliations in which several Messianic outbursts terminated, the rabbinic authorities tried to discourage believers from mastering their own future by issuing binding injunctions. As a burned child must fear the fire, so the faithful must learn how not to take direct action to force the End, diverting all energies towards observance of the Torah and its Mitzvoth. Redemption in the sense of an ultimate act of deliverance is to

be left to 'God alone'.⁹⁷ In the last chapter of his Code devoted to Eschatological concerns, Moses Maimonides defines redemption as 'a reality transcending any existing state, which one can never reach but towards which one should always strive'.⁹⁸ Taking this principle to the extreme, Yeshayahu Leibowitz claimed that 'a Messiah who actually comes is a false Messiah'. 'Having no insight into the designs of Providence', the Jewish people must therefore 'exercise utmost caution before proclaiming of the nature of military victory or national political deliverance as the "dawn of redemption"'.⁹⁹

As a social phenomenon, the 'Jesus movement' emerged out of one of the most sustained periods of Messianic expectations in Judaism. In spite of this, as soon as Christianity changed from a Chiliastic sect into an 'institution of salvation' focused on temporal interests, normative fences were erected in order to contain the revolutionary impulses stemming from the Apocalyptic ideal. Applying ideas originating in Saint Augustine's magisterial work *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos*, Catholicism de-eschatologized the Book of Revelation by interpreting its prophecies allegorically rather than literally, and by positing the Millennium as already begun with the birth of Christ. After the Reformation, several Protestant denominations embraced similar exegetical countermeasures to move the Kingdom of God out of the sphere of future expectation, whilst placing the redemptive emphasis on present experience of faith, as codified by a set of dogmas.¹⁰⁰ Holding the idea of a Messianic Kingdom already and fully 'realized' in Christ's life-time teachings, Passion and Resurrection would have implicitly rendered any attempt to force its coming pointless.¹⁰¹ Mainline Christian churches, Rudolf Bultmann submits, were therefore founded on 'the paradox of a transcendental eternity of the end of history continuously anticipated and enacted within history as an Eschatological present'.¹⁰² Historical time could no longer be abolished by inducing a catastrophic Apocalypse as the utmost degree of soteriological meaning was extracted by believers from institutionalized confessions of faith operating 'diachronically' within its plane. Despite all the efforts undertaken to tame it, the enticement to force the End did not wither away. At present the Apocalyptic spark seems far from being extinguished in the Abrahamitic spectrum, as it continuously sets in motion new cycles of challenge and dissent. Especially in times of tribulation or anomie, the myth of palingenesis will always provide a cultural conduit for heretical, heterodoxical or sectarian movements bent on triggering that violent outbreak from which the *status quo* is to emerge totally purified and renewed.¹⁰³

4.10 The transitional phase

The Apocalyptic root of Western revolutionary thought and practice has often been located in Joachim of Flora's writings and thought. By putting forward a prophetic system dividing human becoming in three successive epochs, the twelfth-century Calabrian abbot and hermit provided a key doctrinal foundation for the spread of religious and secular Millenarianism in the West. As Bernard McGinn noted, it is almost impossible to reduce Joachim's schemes into a simple and organic formula. The abbot, truthful to the Apocalyptic style, expressed himself through symbolic codes and imagery, rather than a systematic program.¹⁰⁴ However, his idiosyncratic ordering of world history - which Joachim extrapolated directly from his ecstatic-mystical visions - revolves around the Christian pattern of the Trinity, as each of the stages he devised is presided over by one of its figures. According to Joachim, the Age of the Father was the primeval phase under the aegis of the Old Testamentarian Law, distinguished by extreme fear and oppression for all humanity. That stage gave way to the Age of the Son or of the New Testament: the current dispensation controlled by the Christian Church and characterized by faith and filial submission. The apex of the abbot's predictive speculations remains the shortly-to-be-inaugurated Age of the Spirit, the *tertium status* flourishing under the Everlasting Gospel.¹⁰⁵ The third and last era was supposed to regenerate the historical dispensation from its current deficiencies by ushering into the 'Spiritual Church': a communitarian polity in which 'knowledge of God would be revealed directly in the hearts of all men'.¹⁰⁶

In short, the final stage can be easily viewed as one of the countless permutations of the paradigmatic earthly Millennium or Messianic Age, a perfect and equalitarian society redeemed from oppression and exploitation, at the foundation of which is 'the idea of justice as a natural manifestation of God'.¹⁰⁷ It is worth noting that the distinctiveness of Joachim's Eschatological approach resides in his assumption that the new stage supersedes the old one, yet without abrogating it entirely. The supersession rather subsumes and renews the previous state of affairs, by bringing it to the furthest level of completeness and harmony - a final synthesis comprising all the preceding antitheses. Quite strangely, despite the heretical-revolutionary tendencies inherent to his 'calendrical and numerological calculations' about the Apocalypse's timeline, Joachim of Fiore lived and worked under the auspices of the Roman religious authorities. Only after his death in 1202, were the

Eschatological lucubrations of the abbot officially banned as theological errors, mainly because, by realizing everlasting love and justice on earth, the final Age of the Spirit would have negated 'any further need for the institution of the Church'.¹⁰⁸

Joachimitism no doubt represents a meliorist philosophy of history - one that deterministically progresses forward, marking at each step an improvement over the past. Nevertheless, the abbot's prophetic system also draws upon the catastrophist side of the Apocalyptic discourse, according to which crisis and decadence precede and at the same time signal the new advent. For Joachim, evil always gives good cause for hope. Even and especially in the darkest days, its emissaries carry the banner of God. During his lifetime, the abbot recognized the indisputable proof of the imminent Millenarian outbreak in the resurgence of Islamic power led by the 'Antichrist' Saladin.¹⁰⁹

Whilst the majority of the interpreters traced Joachimitism's revolutionary charge in the visions concerning the third status, Frank Kermode focuses his attention on the 'transitional phase' leading to it. The literary critic contends that the ultimate source of Joachim's everlasting appeal amongst revolutionaries of all ages and kinds resides in suggesting that humanity might be crossing a *limen* separating the penultimate historical stage from the ultimate Millenarian one. Under the spell of Joachim's triadic prophecy, adds Kermode, it is almost inevitable to read the present as a 'transitus': a period that 'does not properly belong either to the End or to the *saeculum* [the historical eon] preceding it'.¹¹⁰ Whoever subscribes to the idea of standing on the threshold between historical time and transcendental perfection might respond passively, and therefore wait for God's miraculous intervention. But, one might also endorse the opposite stand, and attempt to hasten the End, in order to creatively and pro-actively complete the transition into the last and ultimate age. We shall see in the following pages that this act can be pursued either progressively or catastrophically.

Joachim's paradigmatic sense of transition displays striking resemblances with living in the proximity of the 'no man's land' dividing two battlefronts. In his fascinating study about the combatants' identity during the First World War, Eric J. Leed viewed that conflict as a gigantic and sanguinary 'rite of passage' between two symbolic orders of existence, and the 'trenches experience' as quintessentially 'liminal'.¹¹¹ Once 'beyond the outer boundaries of social life', the combatant becomes fully 'dissociated' from the old order. However, the 'tissues of symbolic connectivity' are lacerated without him

having yet reached 'the new and stable status, with its own new rights and obligations'. Being stranded 'betwixt-and-between' orders implies the 'structural death' of one's 'cherished categories and classifications', and 'a vacation from normalcy into a more permanent estrangement'.¹¹² Here individuals or groups face defencelessly the realm of the unfamiliar and the uncanny. Notwithstanding being imbued with the utmost degree of unsettling ambivalence and anomie, the liminal condition nonetheless offers remarkable creative potentials to those who are lost in its midst. What might appear as a shattering loss of *nomos* can be conversely seen as a cathartic liberation: a vehicle for self-actualization and regeneration from all the constraints, narrowness and pettiness of the preceding life.¹¹³ According to Leed, moments of liminal transition open gaps in historical time that is often filled with 'images of something new'.¹¹⁴ As noted in the first chapter, chaos is an overwhelming Maelstrom in which no stable pattern of order can be envisaged, but also where the opportunities for patterning are unlimited.

Joachim of Flora converted canonical Apocalyptic passages into a predictive scheme capable of directing human action towards a utopian future, and, in this manner, he left an indelible mark in Western history and philosophy. The Joachimite triad immediately received political application, mainly in religious movements and sects aiming at the subversion of the *status quo*. The Christian Church's normative stand about the Apocalypse – a stand as already argued informed by Augustinian theology – could withstand the revolutionary waves that shook the Middle Ages and post-Reformation Europe. The remarkably enduring influence of the 'myth of transition' has been traced by historians in the Anabaptist revolt in the German town of Münster, the peasant rebellion led by visionary prophet Thomas Müntzer, the anarco-communist fantasies of sectarian groups such as the Taborites in Bohemia or the Ranters during Cromwell's Commonwealth, Girolamo Savonarola's theocratic rule of Florence, and, in more recent times, Adolf Hitler's dream of establishing a third Millenarian Reich.¹¹⁵ Leaders and members of these very different movements shared the same impression of living at a turning point in time. Radical involvement was necessary to force a closure, as the End was felt as impending, and a new order about to break in.¹¹⁶

In light of these considerations, it stands to reason that the Apocalypse may be easily shifted out of its conventional predictive-prophetic register. In his recent study about the mutual reinforcement between countercultural Millenarianism-Messianism and Modernity, sociologist John R. Hall charges

that, rather than referring to an absolute and final End (of the world) fixed in an indeterminate future, the 'forward-looking sense of destiny' distinguishing Apocalypticism as a genre might find direct application in the present, mainly as a symbolic remedy addressing and resolving moments of anomic crisis. Whenever history is perceived as an extreme 'social or cultural disjuncture' but at the same time as a *limen* between qualitatively different ages, symbols and archetypes of renewal might empower those who charismatically invoke them. Once the connection between myth, reality and action is realized, sectarian organizations of true believers can enact the idea of a new beginning into the vivid present. The radical militancy of such palingenetic communities can in turn amplify a generalized 'transitional mood'.¹¹⁷

¹ See John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, New York: LAP, 1955, p. 23 and p. 52. It is significant that Locke excluded the Catholics from the beneficiaries of his model of conflict-free society since he deemed the Roman Church having too many vested interests and exceeding jurisdiction in both the public and private sphere. For a synthetic treatment of the philosophical roots of the secularization thesis see especially Derek R. Peterson and Darren Walhof, 'Rethinking Religion' in Derek R. Peterson and Darren Walhof (ed.), *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History*, London: Rutgers University Press, 2002, pp. 1-7; and Charles Taylor, 'The Moral Order: The Transition to Political Modernity' in Michael Hoelzl and Graham Ward (ed.), *Religion and Political Thought: Key Readings - Past and Present*, London: Continuum, 2006, pp. 259-67.

² Talal Asad contends that concerning only one-sixth of the world population, this parochial approach would ignore, distort or relegate to the margins all other religious traditions (for instance, Islam), which designate external or community-based criteria in order to channel and express their religious beliefs. See Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion, Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, op. cit., pp. 27-54.

³ The episode is quoted in R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*, op. cit.; and Duncan B. Forrester, *Apocalypse Now? Reflections on Faith in a Time of Terror*, op. cit., p. 57. Appleby notes that 'U.S. officials described the Ayatollah's revolution as fundamentally a secular movement - a socio-economic protest cloaked up in pseudo-religious wrappings'. The Kroc Institute director also finds 'no more eloquent testimony to the secular bias that has distorted U.S. foreign policy than the fact that the word 'religion' does not appear in the index of *Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger's encyclopaedic account of American statesmanship, published in 1994'. See R. Scott Appleby, 'Globalization, Religious Change and the Common Good', *Journal of Religion, Conflict, and Peace*, Volume 3, Issue 1, Fall 2009.

⁴ 'Vigorous debates have emerged about why religion persists and spirituality thrives under modernizing conditions that might seem to promote secularization. The reason for these debates is obvious enough: against the master narrative of secular Modernity, religion has not faded away into the sphere of private life. Rather, it continues to be a source of identity and social solidarity, and a basis of cultural innovation and collective political action. The debates are nuanced and complex, and today even scholars who identify secularization as a significant social process offer substantially different accounts than those describing a relatively linear process that prevailed among functionalist theorists in the middle of the twentieth century'. John R. Hall, *Apocalypse, From Antiquity to the Empire of Modernity*, London: Polity, 2009, p. 219.

⁵ Said Amir Arjomand, 'Religion and the Diversity of Normative Orders' in Said Amir Arjomand (ed.), *The Political Dimensions of Religion*, New York: SUNY, 1993, p. 53.

⁶ See Said Amir Arjomand, 'Messianism, Millennialism and Revolution in Early Islamic History' in Magnus Thorkell Bernhardsson and Abbas Amanat (ed.), *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, op. cit., pp. 106-25.

⁷ As Arjomand poignantly puts it, 'under routine circumstances, the diversity of normative orders implies distinction and differentiation between the religious and political spheres', which nevertheless vanish altogether whenever 'the fundamental premises of the established

order are actively and radically challenged'. See Said Amir Arjomand, *The Political Dimensions of Religion*, op. cit., p. 2.

⁸ Walter Benjamin, 'The Path to Success, in Thirteen Theses' in Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (ed.), *Selected Writings of Walter Benjamin*, Volume 2, part 1, 1927-1930, Harvard: Belknap, 1999, p.144.

⁹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p.2

¹⁰ Cf. Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, op. cit., pp.224-25.

¹¹ Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come*, op. cit., pp. 188-93.

¹² The metaphor 'pencil sketch' is borrowed from the outstanding study of J.L. Talmon on political Messianism during the French Revolution. J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, London: Penguin, 1952, pp.136-37.

¹³ In the last troubled years of the Weimer Republic, Carl Schmitt argued that 'every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend-enemy grouping. (...) Every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy'. It is worth remembering that, contrary to that of Millenarianism, Schmitt's categorization of the enemy is not morally charged: so as to substantiate the 'political', it is sufficient for him to impersonate the 'other' or the 'stranger'- that is, 'something existentially different and alien'. Cf. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago: CUP, 1996, p. 28, p. 29, and p. 37.

¹⁴ The distinction between the yet-to-appear Antichrist and his present forerunners, introduced by Tertullian in the first century, has persisted to present days 'as a means for denouncing one's rivals for their Antichrist's nature while yet maintaining an eschatological outlook focused on the enemy to be defeated by Christ in the final battle of history'. Cf. Robert Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist, The History of an American Obsession*, op. cit., pp. 33-34 and Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist, Two Thousand Years of Fascination with Evil*, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

¹⁵ 'People are in physical proximities to their own kind and acting within a familiar and natural unit. All their curiosity, anxiety and expectation, meanwhile, are directed towards a second body of men divided from them by a clearly defined distance. (...) The confrontation calls for a special kind of watchfulness, raising the special density within each group. Neither can disband until the other does. The tension between the groups exerts its pressure on everyone belonging to either'. Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, op. cit., p.63.

¹⁶ For a treatment of Zoroastrian Eschatological schemes and their influx on Hebrew and Christian Millenarianism see Anders Hultgard, 'Persian Apocalypticism' in John J. Collins (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Apocalypticism, Volume I, Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 39-84 and also Gherardo Gnoli, 'Manichaeism: An Overview' in Mircea Eliade (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, London McMillan, 1993, pp. 5650-59.

¹⁷ Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith*, op. cit., pp. 217-19 and p. 226.

¹⁸ Thomas Flanagan, 'The Politics of the Millennium', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 17, n. 3, 2005, p. 172.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 171

²⁰ Cf. David G. Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism, Social and Cultural Elements of Social Organization' in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (ed.), *Millennium, Messiah, and Mayhem, Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 38.

²¹ 'A tormenting thought: as of a certain point, history was no longer *real*. Without noting it, all mankind suddenly left reality; everything happening since then was supposedly not true'. Elias Canetti quoted in Jean Baudrillard, 'Hysteresis of the Millennium' in Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (ed.), *The Year 2000, Essays on the End*, New York: NYUP, 1997, p.250.

²² Ibid. p.253.

²³ Vita Fortunati, 'From Utopia to Science Fiction' in Krisham Kumar and Stephen Bann (edit.), *Utopias and the Millennium*, London: Reaktion Book, 1993, p.86.

²⁴ Tzvetan Todorov argues that totalitarian thinking, which is far more common than totalitarian states, is radically impervious to otherness. As Millenarianism, a totalitarian outlook has no place for neutrality: 'the lukewarm are considered as opponents, the opponents as enemies. Because it treats difference as opposition, totalitarianism is radically impervious to otherness - that is, it denies the existence of a *thou* that is comparable to an *I* if not interchangeable with it, while also remaining irreducibly distinct from it'. Cf. Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, London: Atlantic, 2003, p.34-35.

²⁵ Jacob J. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, op. cit., pp. 1-2. In 1923, Giovanni Amendola, a liberal politician and victim of Mussolini's regime, was probably the first to use the term 'totalitarian' so as to describe the 'religious essence' of Fascism, a political movement motivated by the Millenarian ambition to efface all differences and regenerate the Italians into a nation dominated by a single credo: 'A party may seek to dominate political life, but it must not go beyond the confines of the private conscience in which everyone is free to seek refuge. But

fascism did not so much aim to govern Italy as to monopolize the control of Italian consciences. The possession of power is not enough for fascism: it needs to possess the private consciousness of all its citizens; it demands the conversion of Italians. Fascism makes the same claim of a religion. Fascism has the supreme ambitions and inhuman intolerance of a religious crusade. It does not promise happiness to those who do not convert, and it does not leave any room for hope to those who do not let themselves be baptized. (...) Truly, the fascist rising's most striking feature for those who will study it in the future will always be its 'totalitarian spirit', which does not accept that there will be tomorrows with dawns that will not be greeted with a Roman salute, just as it does not accept that today could give succour to souls who have not succumbed to its credo'. Quoted in Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religions*, op. cit., p. 33.

²⁶ Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, op. cit., p. 194.

²⁷ Abbas Amanat, 'Apocalyptic Anxieties and Millennial Hopes in the Salvation Religions of the Middle East' in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imagining the End, Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, op. cit., p.10.

²⁸ This is the note definition of pluralism given by the political scientist Robert A. Dahl in *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, New Haven, YUP, 1983, p.5 quoted in Thomas Flanagan, 'The Politics of the Millennium', op. cit., p.172.

²⁹ 'Because the political process of pluralism often seems to mean only the advancement of special interests, there is fertile ground for millenarian reactions to sprout up. Their attraction is that, in various ways, they stress the interests of the whole and interpret the unedifying conflicts of pluralism as a temporary disorder to be wished away or overcome once and for all. Pluralism is realistic to political scientists, but monism and its dualistic *doppelgänger* are equally rooted in the nature of politics – of pluralist society'. Ibid. 174.

³⁰ Cf. Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 42-43.

³¹ Cf. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.

³² Cf. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (ed.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp.245-53. Weber emphasized that charismatic personalization of power stands against and fulfills the aporia created by the impersonal rationality of legal-bureaucratic legitimacy.

³³ Sociologist Luciano Cavalli maintains that, in the Weberian understanding, the charismatic figure 'brings about a new order, a new social and personal integration. In principle, he lifts people from a state of regression towards the dimension of the extraordinary and the divine, from where true values and norms guide the individual and social life, endowing them with complete meaning'. Luciano Cavalli, 'Charisma and Twentieth Century Politics', in Scott Lash and Sam Whimster (ed.), *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1987, p. 317.

³⁴ Cf. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, op. cit., pp. 271-72. In particular, Moses' Biblical leadership was used as a 'prescriptive model' of political leadership in Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*, New York: Basic Books, 1985; and Aaron Wildavsky, *The Nursing Father: Moses as a Political Leader*, Tuscaloosa, UAP, 1984.

³⁵ Cf. Douglas Masden and Peter G. Snow, *The Charismatic Bond, Political Behaviour in Time of Crisis*, Cambridge: HUP, 1991, p.4.

³⁶ Against Weber's classic objectivist approach, many social and political scientists proposed to read charismatic leadership through the lens of an 'interactionist' model based on the dynamic relationship between leader and audience. Understood in this way, Damian Thompson argues, charismatic authority is substantiated by an 'active process of attribution and imputation that ebbs and flows according to situational exigencies'. According to Ian Craigs, charisma should be interpreted 'not as a quality of a leader, but as a quality projected onto the leader by virtue of situation, opportunity and events'. Thomas Csordas maintains that, being the audience's perceptions so essential for its determination, the real locus of charisma should be, rather than in the personality of the leader, amongst participants of a religious movement. To Peter Worsley, 'charisma can only be that which is recognized, by believers and followers, as charismatic in the behaviour of those they treat as charismatic. Therefore, sociologically viewed, charisma is a function of recognition'. Finally, Scott Appleby underlines that 'charisma does not exist in isolation from human relations; it is essentially interactive, called into being and sustained through constant contact with expectations, hopes, and fears of human beings. The cultural and social horizons of the audience constitute the framework within which a charismatic person becomes a social leader'. Cf. Damian Thompson, *Waiting for the Antichrist, Charisma and Apocalypse in a Pentecostal Church*, Oxford: OUP, 2005, p. 20; Ian Craigs, *Classic Social Theory*, Oxford: OUP, 1997, p. 134; Thomas Csordas, *Language, Charisma and Creativity: The Ritual Life of a Religious Movement*, Berkeley: UCP, 1997, pp. 138-9; Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound, A Study of Cargo Cult in Melanesia*, New York: Schocken Books, 1968, p. xii. Cf. R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *The Spokesmen for the Despised, Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East*, Chicago: CUP, 1997, p. 10.

-
- ³⁷ Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven and New Earth*, op. cit., p. 155.
- ³⁸ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, London: Routledge, 1960, p.36.
- ³⁹ Kenelm Burridge, *Mambu: Melanesian Millennium*, Princeton: PUP, 1995, p. 276.
- ⁴⁰ Weber identified the 'outcome dependant' nature of charismatic leadership as the main source of its instability – despite his underestimation of the role played by the charismatic audience in judging that outcome: 'The charismatic holder is deserted by his following, only because pure charisma does not know any legitimacy other than that flowing from personal strength, that is, one which is constantly being proved. The charismatic hero does not deduce his authority from codes and statutes, [but he] gains and maintains authority solely by proving his strength in life. If he wants to be a prophet, he must perform miracles; if he wants to be a warlord, he must perform heroic deeds. Above all, however, his divine mission must prove itself in that those who faithful surrender to him must fare well. If they do not fare well, he is obviously not the master sent by the gods'. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (ed.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, op. cit., p. 248-9.
- ⁴¹ On the problem of setting a date for the end of the world see Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse, A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, op. cit., pp. 85-88 and pp. 91-92.
- ⁴² Martin Klein, 'Muslim Authority', *Journal of African History*, 31, n. 1, 1990, pp. 158-59 quoted in R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *The Spokesmen for the Despised, Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East*, op. cit., p. 7.
- ⁴³ Cf. Donald Swenson, *Society, Spirituality and the Sacred: A Social Scientific Introduction*, Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1999, p. 248.
- ⁴⁴ Cf. R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *The Spokesmen for the Despised, Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East*, op. cit., p. 9.
- ⁴⁵ Stanley G. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, p. 434.
- ⁴⁶ "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him: 'Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him'. Jesus answered and said unto him: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Nicodemus saith unto him: 'how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' Jesus answered: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, you must be born again'".
- ⁴⁷ Cf. Matthews A. Ojo, 'Born Again' in Brenda E. Brasher (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Fundamentalism*, op. cit., pp. 79-81.
- ⁴⁸ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, op. cit., p. 35..
- ⁴⁹ Cf. Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, op. cit.
- ⁵⁰ Roger Griffin, 'Palingenetic Political Community: Rethinking the Legitimation of Totalitarian Regimes in Interwar Europe', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 3/3, 2002, pp. 24-43.
- ⁵¹ Roger Griffin, 'Palingenetic Political Community', p. 29.
- ⁵² Griffin insists on the fact 'only a small percentage of the population, and then only in special historical circumstances, will fall prey to this particular elective affinity [with the palingenetic vision], and that, no matter how much they share the same structural core in terms of psychological predisposition, even they will have their own idiosyncratic motivations and rationalizations for investing their yearnings for re-birth into the [palingenetic vision]'. Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, op. cit., p. 199.
- ⁵³ Roger Griffin, 'Palingenetic Political Community', op. cit., p. 29 and p. 32.
- ⁵⁴ Cf. Douglas Masden and Peter G. Snow, *The Charismatic Bond, Political Behaviour in Time of Crisis*, op. cit., pp. 5-6.
- ⁵⁵ Roger Griffin, 'Palingenetic Political Community', op. cit., p. 26.
- ⁵⁶ Cf. Douglas Masden and Peter G. Snow, *The Charismatic Bond, Political Behaviour in Time of Crisis*, op. cit., p. 7.
- ⁵⁷ Roger Griffin, 'Palingenetic Political Community', op. cit., p. 26.
- ⁵⁸ Cf. Emilio Gentile, *Religion as Politics*, op. cit., pp. 138-46.
- ⁵⁹ A different terminological choice, particularly common amongst historians and sociologists, distinguishes between 'Millenarianism' and 'Millennialism', considering the former holding the same catastrophic mood of premillennialism, and the latter being characterized by the optimistic, progressive attitude of postmillennialism. Further, as Court reminds us, a distinction of status might be implied in the two terms, 'such that serious philosophical thinkers are "Millennialists"', while the representative of popular culture and superstition are "Millenarians"". John M. Court, *Approaching the Apocalypse, A Short History of Christian Millenarianism*, op. cit., p. 42.
- ⁶⁰ For a general introduction on premillennialism see especially Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Root of Fundamentalism, British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*, Chicago: CUP, 2008, pp. 20-22,

p. 39, p. 89; James West Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought*, New Haven, YUP, 1977, pp.28-29, an exhaustive analysis of premillennialism, compared to other theological interpretations of the Millennium, is offered by George Eldon Ladd, 'Historical Premillennialism' in Robert G. Clouse (ed.), *The Meaning of the Millennium, Four Views*, Downer Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1977, pp.17-63.

⁶¹ Cf. Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse, A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, op. cit., pp. 84-85.

⁶² For a synthetic analysis of Calvinist religious system see Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993, especially pp. 208-18.

⁶³ According to Ernest Lee Tuveson, the postmillennial outlook belittles the catastrophist mood of Apocalypticism and re-evaluate history as a channel of human progress: 'the method of God in working out human salvation is not based on a violent cosmic renewal putting an end to the world, but on a gradual, general redemption of man by means of progressive betterment of his nature through a series of ascending epochs in history'. The Apocalyptic ideas that persecutions, disasters, and diffuse degeneration would immediately precede the glorious Messianic advent tend to oppose any conception of progress in a worldly sense. Cf. Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia, A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress*, op. cit., p. 7

⁶⁴ Loraine Boettner, 'Postmillennialism' in Robert G. Clouse (ed.), *The Meaning of the Millennium, Four Views*, op.cit., pp. 118-20.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 121

⁶⁶ According to Matthew 28:18-20, Christ commended the evangelization of the entire world as follows: 'And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen'.

⁶⁷ Cf. Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse, A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, op. cit., p. 84 and p. 259 (note 57).

⁶⁸ According to the postmillennial reading, the Biblical references supporting the idea that the 'saved' will outnumber the 'lost' are mainly Revelation 7: 9-10, 19:20, 20: 11-15, 21:1, 21:8-16; Luke 2:13, 20:35; Matthew 5:3; Hebrews 11:16. Cf. Loraine Boettner, 'Postmillennialism' in Robert G. Clouse (ed.), *The Meaning of the Millennium, Four Views*, op. cit., pp. 123-25.

⁶⁹ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

⁷⁰ Cf. Dov Schwartz, *Faith at the Crossroads: A Theological Profile of Religious Zionism*, Boston: Brill, 2002 and *Religious Zionism, History and Ideology*, Boston: ASP, 2009.

⁷¹ Cf. Motti Imbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount, Who will Build the Third Temple*, op. cit., pp. 10-11, pp. 110-1, and pp. 116-17.

⁷² Martin L. Gordon, 'Messianism: Two divergent messianic conceptions in After 40 Years of Statehood', *The World Zionist Organization and Mesilot: The World Movement of Mizrachi-Hapoel Hamizrachi*, Jerusalem, 1989.

⁷³ For a survey of the major Jewish Apocalyptic sources see especially John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic, A Post-rabbinic Jewish Apocalyptic Reader*, Atlanta: SBL, 2005.

⁷⁴ The Apocalyptic understanding of redemption maintains the same pessimist stand of Christian premillennialism as the final Messianic age is posited as the outcome of 'an abrupt transition on extreme of darkness to the other of light, an upheaval that is not built on present reality, but that totally negates it'. Further, before the light, the power of darkness must grow: 'manifestations of heresy and religious apostasy, and of moral and social deterioration are taken as clear signs of the birth pangs of the Messiah'. Redemption 'breaks out from the depths of degradation, from the pits of spiritual and material disintegration'. Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., pp. 169-70.

⁷⁵ Words of Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague quoted in Gershon Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, Princeton: Bollinger, 1973, p. 66.

⁷⁶ Passivity is another defining principle of Apocalyptic Messianism. God alone will radically bring about the final fulfilment by gathering and assembling the exiles in Palestine from the four corners of the earth: 'the ingathering of the exiles to Zion depends entirely on a miraculous, revolutionary, and decisive Messianic revelation, and would therefore take place only after the transcendental rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple. Redemption of Israel would thus be both initiated and completed from "Above alone", that is by heavenly powers rather than human ones'. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 17.

⁷⁷ Cf. Martin L. Gordon, 'Messianism: Two divergent messianic conceptions in After 40 Years of Statehood', op. cit.

⁷⁸ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 29

- ⁷⁹ 'This doctrine neutralizes certain revolutionary elements that have accompanied the Messianic ideal, removing from it the paradoxical tone of crisis with which it has always been overlaid. On the contrary, it assumed a decidedly optimistic stand towards historical events'. Ibid. p. 28.
- ⁸⁰ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse, A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, op. cit., pp. 89-90.
- ⁸¹ The overall link between Judeo-Christian Eschatological thought and secular progressivism in its various renditions has been underlined by Karl Lowith's famous work *Meaning in History: the Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*, op. cit.; More particularly, Ernest Lee Tuveson traces back the 'postmillennial root' of the modern idea of progress in *Millennium and Utopia, A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress*, op. cit. and in *Redeemer Nation, The Idea of America's Millennial Role*, Chicago: CUP, 1968.
- ⁸² Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 81.
- ⁸³ Cf. Catherine Wessinger, 'Millennialism With and Without Mayhem' in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (ed.), *Millennium, Messiah, and Mayhem, Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, op. cit., pp. 47-61.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 49-51.
- ⁸⁵ Cf. Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse, A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, op. cit., pp. 89-92.
- ⁸⁶ Cf. Catherine Wessinger (ed.), *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence, Historical Cases*, op. cit., p. 10 and 'Millennialism With and Without Mayhem' in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (ed.), *Millennium, Messiah, and Mayhem, Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, op. cit., p. 51.
- ⁸⁷ This evidence represents one of the major conclusions of James West Davidson's study *The Logic of Millennial Thought*, op. cit., pp. ix-xi and pp. 276-79.
- ⁸⁸ The historical grounds and the key factors facilitating the emergence of either pre- and postmillennial outlooks are listed by Robert K. Whalen in the voices 'premillennialism' and 'postmillennialism' in Brenda E. Basher, *Encyclopaedia of Fundamentalism*, London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 383-87 and pp. 336-370.
- ⁸⁹ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse, A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, op. cit., p. 92.
- ⁹⁰ Cf. Said Amir Arjomand, 'Messianism, Millennialism and Revolution' in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imagining the End, Visions of Apocalypses from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, op. cit., p. 108.
- ⁹¹ Cf. Alessandro Pizzorno, *The Roots of Absolute Politics and Other Essays*, Feltrinelli: Milan, 1994 [in Italian].
- ⁹² Cf. Werner Georg Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus*, London: SCM Press, 1957.
- ⁹³ Jean Baudrillard, 'Hysteresis of the Millennium' in Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (ed.), *The Year 2000, Essays on the End*, op. cit., p. 254.
- ⁹⁴ Cf. Catherine Wessinger, 'Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution and Violence' in Catherine Wessinger (ed.), *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence, Historical Cases*, op. cit., p. 8.
- ⁹⁵ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., pp. 129-30.
- ⁹⁶ Cf. Malise Ruthven, *Fundamentalism, The Search for Meaning*, Oxford: OUP, 2004, p. 92-94.
- ⁹⁷ The Rabbinical authorities accused the Messianic fervour animating the Zealots' revolt to be the main responsible for the siege of Jerusalem, culminating with the destruction of its Temple in 70 CE by the Romans. In the second century, another revolutionary attempt led by the Messianic figure Bar Kokhba established a Jewish state for over two years, but finally a massive Roman military intervention crushed it with a heavy death toll. The traumatic outcome of those revolts inspired by Eschatological-Apocalyptic longings, argues Gershom Sholem, led the bearers of religious authorities 'in the direction of removing Messianism into the realm of pure faith and inaction, leaving the redemption to God alone and not requiring the activity of men'. In this sense, quite indicative are the homiletic prohibitions of the *Song of Songs* 2:7: 'not to rebel against the kingdoms of this world, not to force the end of days'. Cf. Gershom Sholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism, And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, op. cit., pp. 56-7.
- ⁹⁸ See especially Yeshayahu Leibowitz's famous essay 'Redemption and the Dawn of Redemption' in *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, Harvard: HUP, 1992, pp. 121-27.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁰ For an exhaustive overview on this crucial and at the same time complex subject see especially Adam Seligman's articles 'Christian Utopias and Christian Salvation: A General Introduction' and 'The Eucharist Sacrifice and the Changing Utopian Moment in Post Reformation Christianity' in *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, XXIX, 1-2, 1988, pp. 16-19; and pp. 31-32.
- ¹⁰¹ Most notably, the New Testament scholars Karl Barth and C. H. Dodd argued in favour of a Messianic Kingdom already accomplished by the redemptive meaning of First Coming of Jesus. In other words, the Reign of God is not to be expected after a future Apocalyptic catastrophe since it has been 'anticipated' in Christ's life-teachings, Passion and Resurrection. Consistent with this approach, the Kingdom of God moves out from the sphere of future expectation into

the sphere of the present experience of faith. Cf. Junger Moltman, *The Coming of God, Christian Eschatology*, op. cit., pp. 13-16 and Michael Norhcott, *An Angel Directs the Storm, Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2004, pp.118-29.

¹⁰² According to the German theologian, Christianity acts intra-historically on the basis of a Messianic vision that, in its original formulation, not only did not attach much meaning to the world as such, but also expected its imminent supersession. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology*, Edinburg: EUP, 1957, p. 53 and p.155.

¹⁰³ Cf. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium, Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, op. cit., pp. 282-85.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End, Apocalyptic Tradition in the Middle Ages*, op. cit., pp. 128-27. For an excellent treatment of the Joachimite prophetic system and its massive impact on Western thought see especially Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969; and *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, London: SPCK, 1976.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought*, London: Macmillan, 1985; and *Visions of the End*, op. cit., pp. 126-141.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, op. cit., pp. 110-21.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. James F. Rinehart, *Revolution and the Millennium, China, Mexico, and Iran*, London: Praeger, 1997, pp. 22-23.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. John R. Hall, *Apocalypse, From Antiquity to the Empire of Modernity*, op. cit., p. 63.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought*, op. cit., pp. 1-47; and E. Randolph Daniel, 'Joachim of Flora: Patterns of History in the Apocalypse' in Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn, *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, pp. 72-88.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Frank Kermode, 'Apocalypse and the Modern' in Saul Friedlander, Gerard Holton, Leo Marx and Eugene Skolnikoff, *Visions of Apocalypse, End or Rebirth?*, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985; and *Sense of an Ending*, op. cit., p. 12.

¹¹¹ See Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War 1*, Cambridge: CUP, 1980, Chapter I.

¹¹² Ibid. pp. 17-21.

¹¹³ Referring to the Italian experience of the Great War, historian Emilio Gentile defines the palingenesis taking place in the liminal phase of the trenches as 'metanoia': an epiphanic moment of sudden, violent and all-encompassing initiation to a new life which demands the demise of the old one. Cf. Emilio Gentile, 'The Myth of National Regeneration in Italy. From Modernist Avant-garde to Fascism' in Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff (ed.), *Fascist Visions*, op. cit., p. 38.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land*, op. cit., p. 15

¹¹⁵ A still unparalleled historical survey about the spread of Joachimitism in the Middle Ages is that which was written more than fifty years ago by Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium, Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchist of the Middle Ages*, op. cit.; on the direct link between Joachim of Flora and the radical-protest movements of the late Medieval and Reformation period (in particular those organized around the charismatic personalities of Thomas Muntzer and Gerrard Winstanley) see especially Christopher Rowland's study *Radical Christianity: A Reading of Recovery*, New York: Orbis Books, 1988; on the impact of Joachim's Tertium Status on Girolamo Savonarola's radicalism see Bernard McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters by Lactantius, Adso of Montier-en-Derl, Joachim of Fiore, the Spiritual Franciscans and Savonarola*, New York: Paulist Press International, 1979; on the influence of the triadic prophecy over Adolf Hitler and the Nazi ideology see especially James Rhodes, *The Hitler Movement: A Modern Millenarian Revolution*, Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1980; David Redles, *Hitler's Millennial Reich, Apocalyptic Belief and the Search of Salvation*, New York: NUP, 2005; and Robert Wistrich, *Hitler's Apocalypse, Jews and the Nazi Legacy*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism, The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, op. cit., pp. 6-9; pp. 100-107.

¹¹⁷ See John R. Hall, *Apocalypse, From Antiquity to the Empire of Modernity*, op. cit., pp. 3-4, p. 11, p. 42, and p. 201.

Chapter V: Jewish Religious Zionism

According to mainstream press and media, the new Democratic Administration taking power in the White House is determined to instantiate a 'wave of change' in the US foreign policy towards the Middle East.¹ So far, the only substantial discontinuity with the past consists in suggesting that a divergence might exist between American and Israeli interests in that area – an admission which has been considered a 'virtual taboo' since the end of the cold war. In Washington, the irritation is reported to be widening, as the Israeli government's intransigence over the settlements issue antagonizes the new diplomatic approach towards the Islamic world. No overtures towards the more moderate Arab regimes can be thought of, let alone undertaken whilst the Israeli government keeps 'poking the Islamic world in the eye' with its maximalist policies in the occupied territories.² The Obama Administration made clear that it would be impossible to negotiate a serious and lasting peace in the Middle East, if Israel continues to back the building of new houses in East Jerusalem and expand its network of settlements in the West Bank. *Fatah*, the Palestinian authority recognized as a legitimate diplomatic counterpart since the Oslo Agreements, refuses to sit at the negotiation table - at this stage, only for proximity talks - until a complete settlement freeze and evacuation takes place on the Israeli part.³

At present, Benjamin Netanyahu is therefore caught in a political double bind. On the one hand, the Israeli Prime Minister must to some extent comply with President Obama's demands as he cannot risk compromising the 'special relationship' with the United States, which over the last decade granted Israel over \$3 billion a year, one-third of the entire US foreign aid budget.⁴ In addition, only a certain amount of international isolation can be tolerated in the foreseeable future, if Israel hopes to secure American support on a key national security concern such as Iran. On the other hand, just as a force can, through acting, increase another that is acting in the opposite direction, Netanyahu is subject to a domestic strain whose intensity is positively proportional to the degree of international pressure he confronts on the settlements issue. The stability of his coalition government is hostage to a core of right-wingers, who uncompromisingly oppose any diplomatic commerce over the West Bank and East Jerusalem.⁵ In particular, the Israeli Prime Minister has to accommodate the demands of the politically prominent, yet often ignored, 'national-religious' or 'Religious Zionist' constituency: a complex religious-political compound

whose *raison d'être* is heavily reliant upon the Jewish presence beyond the Green Line (the 1949 Armistice Line). The Messianic worldviews animating Religious Zionism's stand in Israeli and international politics are the subject of the present chapter.

Since its foundation, the modern State of Israel has represented a 'paradigmatic case' where secular politics and religion overlap and intermingle. The lack of a formal written constitution was attributed to the fact that the members of the Constituent Assembly could not agree upon the role Judaism was supposed to play within the newly born nation.⁶ That underlying indecision also reverberated on the Declaration of Independence of May 1948, a document blending universalistic values of democracy and pluralism with particularistic themes and imagery resonating with Hebrew Biblical lore.⁷ In Israel, ascertaining the exact balance between religious and secular prerogatives and respective spheres of influence has always been the object of a never-ending negotiation.⁸ Nonetheless, in light of the power that the religious right is currently able to wield over Israeli society and political system, Ben Gurion's famous forecast that religion would inevitably wane with the advancement of the Zionist project seems to have been disproved.

The Haredi and the national-religious represent the two principal components of Israel's religious right. Although theologically different, they share the same ultra-Orthodox moorings. Having doubled their population both in the mainland and occupied territories in the past decade, these two religious denominations represent together the fastest growing demographic sector in Israel. Further, given the nature of the political and electoral system, the national-religious and ultra-orthodox parties carry a weight far exceeding the number of their voters, especially for what concerns the government's decision-making over sensitive matters like the future of the occupied territories.⁹ In particular, members and sympathizers of the national-religious camp are an integral part of the larger society, occupying strategic roles in various layers of the government, economy, bureaucracy, media, state education system and, most recently, the highest ranks of the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces).¹⁰ However, the Religious Zionist focus remains on advancing the settlement project throughout the West Bank.

In defiance of international law, Israeli demographic growth in the occupied territories has risen steadily over the past thirty years, bringing the total up to 289,600 settlers.¹¹ The militants of the Gush Emunim - the movement inspired by the Religious Zionist creed - constitute only a minority among the Jewish

residents in the West Bank (25% of the overall population). Nonetheless, they are concentrated in sensitive points in the contested terrain. Their 'ideological' settlements and outposts are strategically located on the hills of Judea and Samaria, at the heart of the Jewish 'sacred geography'. As visible on an aerial map, the Gush Emunim spread in the West Bank forms a median string stretching from north to south,¹² and engulfing cherished sites of Jewish Biblical inheritance and memory. Included in this area are Rechelim, Beit-El (Bethel), Ofra, Jenin, Shechem (Nablus), Ramallah, Bethlehem, Halhul, Hebron, and, last but not least, East Jerusalem, which represents 'the jewel' of the Religious Zionist identity.¹³ Yet the territory recognized by the Hebrew Scriptures as 'the Land of the Patriarchs' is also where the majority of the Arab population today resides: 3.5 million Palestinians live in the occupied territories, 2 million of them in the West Bank.¹⁴

The motivations at the basis of the national religious presence in the occupied territories are complex and multi-layered. At a cursory glance, the settlement project can be seen as a means to establish 'geo-demographic' facts on the ground thwarting any government policies aimed at a territorial compromise with the Palestinians. As Michael Fiege observes, through their 'thereness' and 'defiant existence', the national-religious settlements proved to be the most effective safeguard for the cause of Eretz Ysrael.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the thrust animating that maximalist irredentism is inherently Messianic. This transcendental aspect in Gush Emunim's politics of territorial annexation is more often than not misconceived or underestimated. The re-Judaization of the entire Land of Israel, which is seen by activist-believers as a primary religious duty to perform in present day reality, represents the physical implementation of a grand vision of redemption. This vision assumes concrete form on the hills of Judea and Samaria, in guise of a growing network of settlements and outposts.

Since its inception in 1974, Gush Emunim could not be easily categorized according to the standard parameters of political sciences, given its elusive and unconventional character as well as political goals. Even during its political apogee, that is, in the years of Israel's first Likud governments, the movement never possessed formal membership or official cadres. After it ceased to exist as an organization in the late 1980s, it continued to function as an 'ideological umbrella' for the national-religious militants in the West Bank, nurturing their uncompromising 'non-withdrawal' stand. Also distinctive is the double standard which serves as the basis of its *modus operandi* in politics. Gush

Emunim can either effectively lobby in the Knesset or resort to organized protest outside it. David Newman defines this peculiar political behaviour as an amalgamation between religious Fundamentalism and political pragmatism:

[Gush Emunim has] the ability to maintain an extra-parliamentary protest posture, while, at one and the same time, attaining legitimacy through cooptation as part of the political and institutional framework of the State and Government, with access to public sector resources as a means of advancing their political and ideological objectives.¹⁶

Further, Gush Emunim has been idiosyncratically ambivalent even in respect of the outer world. On the one hand, its Messianic message is not exclusively inward looking, directed at those who have already adhered to its doctrine. The movement rather holds the desire to 'conquer' and 'transform' the surrounding society.¹⁷ Its members, distinguished by an intensified level of religiosity and dedication, stick out as a leading vanguard of spiritual revolution that follows a precise nation-rebuilding agenda. The plan consists in the conversion of greater Jewish masses to the Religious Zionist creed, and the replacement of the current secular order with a theocratic rule in which every aspect is covered and ordained by the Torah and its commandments. On the other hand, Gush Emunim paradoxically entails a voluntary withdrawal from the rest of the Israeli society. So as to forestall the perils of being sucked into the vortex of modernity, hedonism, and secularism, activist believers retreat into cohesive 'enclave' communities, whose boundaries are defined by purity, asceticism and righteousness.¹⁸ There, within the sacred enclosure of the settlement, the energies are dedicated to various religious duties and rituals, first and foremost the settling of the Land. This self-imposed seclusion is however only a 'tactical measure, a temporary setback in preparation for a renewed [revolutionary] breakthrough'.¹⁹ Gush Emunim's oscillation between mystical-religious withdrawal and political-revolutionary involvement can only be explained by considering its community east of the Green Line as a 'countersociety':

Gush Emunim's society operates alongside Israeli society: half dependent and half independent, apart from the public and the establishment but competing with it and aspiring to lead it. The Jewish fundamentalist enclaves, especially the settlements, are ghetto-like, with all the advantages this allows for leading a religious life in a secular world. At the same time, the settlements are both a bridgehead for assault and a model of an alternative life-style. Gush Emunim is more than just an intellectual current or pressure group: it is actually a countersociety.²⁰

The settlers are the forerunners of the theocratic order they advocate for the larger Israeli polity. Their virtuous and puritanical lifestyle on the hills of Judea

and Samaria testifies that the Messianic vision upon which the Zionist state is supposed to be refashioned represents a viable socio-political option.²¹ Another paradox consists in the fact that, especially during the years of the Likud administration, the Gush Emunim benefited from financial resources provided by the same secular institutions which its Messianic revolution aspired to take over.

Gush Emunim's agenda is pursued through well-pondered programmes and tactics, devised appositely for the outer world. Two converging processes simultaneously take place, each a prerequisite for the attainment of the other. As already mentioned, Gush Emunim's palingenetic project is advanced physically, by territorial colonization of the West Bank. But the re-Judaization of places sacred to Jewish memory is carried out in parallel with an effort of mass pedagogy. To secure the success of the Jewish spiritual awakening, it is deemed necessary to settle not only in the Land, but also in the 'hearts' of the Israelis. Hence, over the last three decades an informational and educational campaign reached out towards the general public, so as sensitize it to the holy cause of Eretz Ysrael.²² According to Ian Lustick's seminal study, the Gush Emunim's conjoint project (colonialist and mass pedagogical) aims at the full transition of Judea and Samaria into an 'ideological-hegemonic' status: a stage in which a given territorial asset becomes so embedded in the collective perception of the homeland's geography that relinquishing it - even for a compelling and plausible reason such as the resolution of the conflict with the Arab neighbours - would be beyond the scope of common sense.²³

In concluding remarks to the most updated ethnographic-sociological analysis of the settlements project, Fiege charges that 'although Gush Emunim succeeded impressively in settling the Land, it failed to convince most Israelis that Judea and Samaria are indeed the national homeland that must never be forsaken or forgotten'.²⁴ That the Jewish presence in the occupied territories has not been broadly accepted as a culturally unproblematic *fait accompli* would be confirmed by the 'relative disinterestedness' of the public opinion shown at the Gaza pull out in July 2005, and by the general willingness towards dismantling, 'under appropriate circumstances', more settlements in the West Bank for furthering the peace process. In other words, adds Fiege, amongst the vast majority of Israelis, 'there are no longer hearts in which to settle, and maybe there never were'.²⁵ Despite this, the facts on the ground remain along with people disposed to sacrifice everything in order to defend them: 'once reality

beats the [Messianic] vision, only those who trust supernatural forces keep that vision alive'.²⁶

The plausibility of the last contention is reinforced by the striking difference, in attitude and commitment, between the secular and the religious residents in the West Bank. From the Second Intifada onwards, most of the lethal attacks against Israeli citizens occurred in the occupied territories, and indiscriminately targeted both secular and national-religious settlers. Further, the separation barrier constructed during Ariel Sharon's government as a security measure against Arab terrorism was soon recognized as an 'acknowledgment that settlements lying to its east could, one day, be evacuated'.²⁷ As a result of this, more than half of the secular residents 'sought a way out', by accepting the evacuation compensations offered by the State and relocating their home elsewhere in Israel. In contrast, almost all the national-religious families remained in the unfavourable terrains of Judea and Samaria, and more of them moved in to occupy those places left vacant by the seculars.²⁸ Today, Gush Emunim remains a resourceful, well-organized and motivated community that no doubt will engage in battle if its existence and values are to be put at risk by a territorial compromise with the Palestinian authorities. It is thus crucial to try to enter the Religious Zionist mind-set in order to understand why it commands such a passionate and seemingly uncompromising affiliation with Eretz Yisrael.

Until recently, a serious theological understanding has been conspicuously absent from any diplomatic approach to the Middle East peace processes, let alone an appreciation of the significance of the Messianic zeal in animating the national-religious settlement enterprise. More than bringing the reader *à jour* with the current state of the Arab-Israeli conflict, this chapter offers an understanding of Religious Zionism as a complex belief system. In particular, it aims at uncovering the reasons at the basis of its engagement in Israeli politics, by using the themes and arguments that have previously been developed on Jewish Eschatology and Messianic thought. To prove a meaningful relationship between beliefs and political action, this chapter highlights how the sanctity of the Land of Israel (along with the imperative to settle it and not to compromise its integrity) derives directly from the Mystical-Cabbalist teachings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the founding father and chief ideologue of Religious Zionism. The Rabbi viewed redemption as a gradualist process of cosmic repair, in which the Chosen People play a purposive role not only for the sake of Israel, but also for that of the rest of the world. If active participation in settling all

Eretz Ysrael hastens the coming of the Messianic age, even a minimal withdrawal from it would entail both contravening God's will and halting the process of universal salvation.

At the core of Rabbi Kook's thought lies the insistence that the profane is the external manifestation of the inner holy foundation of reality, and, accordingly, there is no such thing as a separation between state and religion. In his rich corpus of philosophical and religious writing, the rabbi maintained that Zionism was a mundane tool through which God advances the process of redemption. On this ground, Kook's followers hailed the foundation of modern Israel in May 1948 and its territorial expansion after the Six Day War miraculous events confirming the imminence of the Messianic era.

5.1 An anti-Messianic undertaking

Since its outset at the end of the 19th Century, Zionism was addressed and rejected by Jewish Orthodoxy on theological grounds. The nationalist movement promoting the normalization of the Chosen triggered complex hermeneutical debate and endless deliberations in almost every rabbinic circle of Western and Eastern Europe. The discussion took place primarily from the Messianic standpoint. Zionism was condemned as a 'stumbling block for the pious Jew' not only in light of its decisive anti-religious stand, but foremost considering the Eschatological allusions stemming from its political program. Despite a gloss of modern and secular ideology, Zionism never refrained, especially in its constitutive phase, from deploying powerful redemptive symbols associated with the End of Days.²⁹ The Jewish awakening was supposed to take place by 'ascension' to the Biblical land, the blooming of the deserts, and the re-establishment of a national home in Palestine. Given the highly Messianic import that its enterprise evoked, it was impossible not to assess Zionism from a religious standpoint.³⁰

It is often forgotten or underestimated that the religious rebuke of Zionism is the outcome of how Orthodoxy understands the Messianic process. In keeping with the Apocalyptic approach, Rabbinic Judaism believes that Israel's redemption will be both initiated and completed by heavenly powers, and not by natural means. Only a divine irruption in history can catastrophically resolve the present historical deficiency represented by the Exile, and inaugurate a state of ultimate perfection and harmony in the Land of the Fathers. Any mundane attempt to hasten the Messianic Age is therefore

proscribed as a sacrilegious venture. If redemption does not arise from the 'Great Redeemer Himself in His Glory, it is not 'the path to the true salvation, or the long-desired goal'', but an incidental 'fly in the ointment'.³¹ The end of exilic subjugation, the ingathering of the Diaspora Jews, the national restoration of Israel, and the rebuilding of the Temple are sacred undertakings to be deferred until the Messiah comes. The faithful can only patiently wait for a miraculous and transcendental deliverance.³²

Political quietism and passivity acquired normative status after sectarian campaigns for national independence brought disastrous consequences upon the Jewish communities. The Great Revolt led by the radically Messianic Zealots (66-70 c.e.) entailed Rome's brutal repression, the end of the fairly autonomous Second Commonwealth, and the destruction of Jerusalem's Second Temple. The Bar Kokhba rebellion (132-35 c.e.) - a mass irredentist uprising sparked by similar End Time impulses - produced no lesser repercussions than the Great Revolt: the Jews of Judea were exiled or exterminated. Only in Galilee did a small Jewish population survive in the Land of Israel.³³ These traumatic events were followed by a real revolution within the religious leadership: the Pharisees, or rabbis, supplanted the old priestly elites as new spiritual guides, imposing a radical change in theological attitudes.³⁴ Purity and piety became normatively binding not for their own sake, but because they were deemed the most appropriate religious principles to preserve rabbinic authority, the welfare of the communities, and to avert further damage provoked by Messianic forms of political militancy. The yoke of the Exile and the powerlessness that ensued from that condition were therefore hailed as decrees that God imposed as expiation for Israel's sins. All national aspirations over the Land of the Fathers were to be put on hold until the Messianic age, a final realization that became strictly forbidden to force. The pious Jew was expected to consider the abdication of military prowess 'as much parts of the Jewish tradition as the prohibition to eat pork'.³⁵ Exchanging the path of national revolt with a more accommodating attitude towards foreign rule led paradoxically to greater stability and autonomy. With the Roman Empire's sanction and support, rabbinical Judaism reached its golden age, flourishing throughout the Middle Ages as the received religious, legal and communal system.³⁶

The rabbinic sages designed normative 'safeguards' so as to keep inalienable but ultimately self-destructive aspects of Messianism from their application in historical time. The intention was to maintain the equilibrium of the exile, by discouraging Jewish massive return to or a Holy War over the Land of Israel –

that is, eventualities that could have triggered again, as a backlash, the wrath of the various foreign hegemonies under which the Jewish communities lived after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 c.e. The doctrinal fence around the ever-present temptation to hasten the end was erected by putting forward three oaths. These 'axiomatic vows', firstly enshrined in the Babylonian Talmud, acquired legal halakhic status later, in Medieval times.³⁷ Still today they stand at the heart of the Orthodox denunciation of secular Zionism: 1) The God fearing Jew must swear that he would not rebel against the Gentile nation, as the Holy One, in exchange, made the Gentile nations swear that they would not subjugate Israel too harshly; 2) Further, he must not make *aliyah* (to migrate *en masse* or in an organized fashion to the Land of Israel) before the appointed time, but rather wait for the miracle of God's intervention;³⁸ 3) Finally, the Jew must not pray too strongly for the coming of the Messiah, so as not to bring Him about prematurely. Over the first half of the last century, quite tellingly, the centrality of the oaths in the Orthodox debate waxed as a Zionist settling in the Land of Israel increased as a viable socio-political prospect, and, conversely, waned when the same prospect receded.³⁹

In its original formulation, the Messianic ideal affirms that the Chosen will be liberated by a Messiah, divinely appointed to be their king and bring about a new age distinguished by perfection, justice and peace. Rabbinic Orthodoxy attempted to neutralize the political implications of this ideal not only rendering its realization strictly contingent on supernatural fiat, but also shifting the balance towards the spiritual side of redemption: 'instead of militant action, a religious ethical preparation of the individual was prescribed, to make the world worthy of salvation'.⁴⁰ Orthodoxy charges that the hope for final deliverance in the Land of Israel - a hope famously encapsulated in the dictum 'next year in Jerusalem' - is reserved only 'for synagogue and prayer', that is, for the Jews' contemplative feeling alone, without any repercussion on their practical conduct.⁴¹ In pre-Messianic times, the only legitimate means to pursue redemption consists in studying the Torah, respecting its commandments, maintaining oneself separate from the Gentiles and their sinful culture, and, foremost, making amend for one's sins. More than a physical state, exile appears therefore to be a condition of the Jewish soul. This condition cannot be rectified by a historical breakthrough, but by a therapeutic process of inner repentance (*teshuvah*), leading the faithful from present deficiency towards final fulfillment. According to a parable attributed to Rabbi Joseph Haim Sonnenfeld (1848-1932):

The people of Israel find themselves in such a situation. God has exiled us on account of our sins, and exile is as a hospital for the Jewish people. It is inconceivable that we take control of our land before we are completely cured. God keeps us and protects us, and administers to us His 'medicinal' trials in perfect measurement and dosage. We are certain that when we are completely healed of our sins, God will not hesitate for a moment, and will deliver us. How could we be in such haste to leave hospital in the face of mortal danger, a worldwide danger that hangs over our heads? God forbid! What we seek of deliverance is that our cure be completed; we seek not to return in ill health to the royal palace, God forefend.⁴²

Orthodoxy reads both Judaism and Messianism as being centred on the Torah, rather than on the Land.⁴³ Salvation does not rely on the settling of *Eretz Ysrael*, let alone on political sovereignty over it. In pre-Messianic times, the Torah supersedes the Land in its physical sense, as the true 'national territory' of Judaism. The centrality of the Torah and the Mitzvahs is also confirmed by the fact that, although a State of Israel has been established in Palestine, Jewish faith in the Diaspora did not wither away, but it is undergoing a remarkable renewal.⁴⁴ More than settling the Land, the present day task of the pious Jews consists in responding 'finally' and 'fully' to the challenge imposed by their privileged status: becoming a holy people, by leading a life based on precepts and ideals of purity.⁴⁵

Any worldly effort to hasten the Messianic process is not an inconsequential sin. Settling in the Holy Land before the appointed time is a serious usurpation of God's prerogatives, which might undermine the Covenant of the Children of Israel, delay their redemptive process, and even cause them unprecedented suffering. Orthodox Judaism tends to interpret any historical calamity befalling the Jewish people - from the most minor to the most catastrophic of the accidents - as a divine punishment triggered by shortcomings in their religious conduct.⁴⁶ Hence, the secular entreaty to bring the Exile to a conclusion against God's will is denounced as a real threat to the Jewish life. A passage in the Babylonian Talmud [Sanhedrin, 92b] recounting the fate of the Tribe of Ephraim is often quoted in support of this warning. As the members of the tribe attempted prematurely to go out of Egypt towards the Promised Land, and perished as a result of their haste, so the Zionist undertakings would lead many Jews spiritually astray and, ultimately, to destruction.⁴⁷ Calling for *aliya* before the advent of the Messiah is an insidious trap, which prolongs the exile rather than ending it. So as to dissuade Jews from such a satanic temptation, Orthodoxy forewarns that the punishment becomes even more unforgiving as the transgressions are committed within the sacred perimeter of *Eretz Ysrael*.

There is a deeper and more comprehensive relationship with God in the Promised Land than anywhere else on earth. Migrating and living in there, while setting aside the Torah and the Mitzvahs, would therefore expose the Chosen to major dangers.⁴⁸

Further, in combination with the admonition not to hasten the end, another critical argument is often raised in the Orthodox polemic. For many rabbis, any Zionist attempt to instantiate a Jewish national awakening by natural-historical means would inevitably fall short of perfection. To them, an infinite and unbridgeable chasm subsists between the incomplete, relative and transient essence of any human [redemptive] activity in this world, and the absolute perfection stemming from the otherworldly intercession in the cycles of history – an intercession that, in accordance with the Apocalyptic reading of the Messianic process endorsed by Orthodoxy, would abolish the present eon to inaugurate a qualitative different one. The fullness of redemption, in other words, can be assured only by drawing a clear line between the two spheres - the divine and the mundane - and removing the former as far as possible from the latter, in particular from the human intrusions arising from it. Once again, poignant examples to support this claim are drawn from the Biblical repertoire: both the restorations that took place after the Exodus from Egypt and under the Persian patronage of Cyrus fell into new and harsher exiles because they were realized through imperfect human endeavor. In order to be final, total and permanent, deliverance in the third and last Jewish Commonwealth must be expected 'at the hands of the Holy One, blessed be He, and not by flesh and blood'.⁴⁹

5.2 The Haredi world

Haredi (or Charedi) is the standard shorthand to define present day ultra-Orthodoxy, the most theologically conservative stream of Judaism. The term 'Haredi' (pl. Haredim) literally means 'one who trembles in awe of God'.⁵⁰ Everything in the ultra-Orthodox lifestyle is built around the enforcement of age-old rabbinic codes. The faithful strive to become closer to God by studying the Torah and respecting its 613 mitzvot (commandments), which they believe had been imposed on them by God. Haredim fully subscribe to the Jewish religious law on issues such as segregation between men and women in public places, strict adherence to the Sabbath rules, modest dress, and kosher food. Attaining the 'purest form' of Judaism also implies separation from what is seen

as not pure. Ultra-Orthodox Jews mainly live in East Jerusalem enclave communities. Their distinctive black and white dress code represents a further 'defense mechanism' against assimilation to the modern, westernized and morally corrupt Israel.⁵¹ Making up about 10% of the overall population, Haredim currently hold a disproportionate weight within Israeli society and politics. Given an unparalleled birth rate in its communities, this religious denomination no doubt represents Israel's fastest growing demographic sector.⁵² Despite the impression of homogeneity, the Haredi world is fraught with variations, complexities, and contradictions. Each ultra-Orthodox group displays its normative stand on a wide range of issues. Peculiarly divisive is theological debate regarding secular Zionism and the Israeli state.

The Edah Haredit and the Neturei Karta are the Haredi identities endorsing the most extreme anti-Zionist posture. Judaism and Zionism are seen as utterly different and diametrically opposed concepts, which should be kept separate. The former represents 'a Godly way of life going back thousands of years', which is 'full of moral, ethical and religious content'. The latter is 'a comparatively new secular nationalistic concept completely devoid of ethics and morals'.⁵³ Although in present day Israel the anti-Zionist Haredim are numerically negligible, the impact of their radical views - or better, the theological challenge posed by it - is widely felt within the ultra-Orthodox camp.⁵⁴ Their members live in complete isolation from the secular lifestyle, eschewing any political involvement with the State. They defer from military service in the IDF⁵⁵ and refuse to pay taxes or participate in elections; and they consistently renounce any financial or institutional support stemming from the public sector. The unwavering and unconditional Haredi rejection of the Zionist project - as well as the national-religious ideologies that currently pledge allegiance to it - is theologically grounded in the three Talmudic vows. The Neturei Karta, in particular, maintains that 'unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain' [Psalms 127:1]. As a collective attempt to hasten the end, the Zionist nationalist revival constitutes 'a rebellion against the Kingdom of Heaven, an aggressive aspiration to overstep human boundaries into the realm reserved for God'.⁵⁶ In the anti-Zionist view, this sinful interference with the divine prerogatives is doomed to failure and has already produced catastrophic repercussions on the Jewish people. The Neturei Karta's uncompromisingly passive stand on redemption led some of its prominent rabbis to the controversial conclusion that the Holocaust was an inevitable punishment, which God inflicted upon the Jews for having contravened the

oath not to return to Zion before the appointed time.⁵⁷ In order to dissociate themselves from Zionist 'sins', both Edah Haredit and the Neturei Karta have repeatedly called for full Arab autonomy in the occupied territories and also in East Jerusalem. Anti-Zionist Haredim believe that Jewish sovereignty cannot be exerted over the Promised Land as long as the condition of the Exile still persists. Being eternal and absolute, the sanctity of Eretz Ysrael prevails even if there are no Jews living on its soil. Therefore, in case the Palestinians were to return to the occupied territories (including East Jerusalem), the Neturei Karta and other anti-Zionist Haredim 'would relate to them exactly as they would towards any other foreign ruler. They would try to gain a maximum of rights for themselves as Jews striving to fulfil their religious commitments, without mixing religion and secular nationalism'.⁵⁸

The vast majority of ultra-Orthodox Jews, nonetheless, are not as vocally anti-Zionist as the members of the Edah Haredit and the Neturei Karta. These Haredim are often defined as 'non-Zionist'. Rather than condemning a priori, they opt for a much more pragmatic and nuanced stance, by differentiating 'between secular Zionism and the state to which it gave rise: while rejecting the former, they grant the latter de facto recognition'.⁵⁹ Under thoroughly pondered circumstances, it is deemed permissible to receive economic support from the Israeli State, to vote in its general elections, and actively participate in its governments (even those cabinets featuring women as ministers). Non-Zionist Haredim embrace an almost Hobbesian stand: a secular state better fulfils the Jewish individual's need for survival and protection from the Gentile nations – a need that became particularly urgent as a result of the Holocaust.⁶⁰ However, the Zionist state being an entirely neutral entity, devoid of any religious significance, any Haredi involvement in its politics is theologically inconsequential. For these ultra-Orthodox Jews there is no relation whatsoever (be it negative or positive) between the Zionist institutions and the Messianic process. As far as the value of the Israeli State is concerned, the Haredi pragmatic approach differs not only from the view of the Neturei Karta, but equally from that of Religious Zionism. The former regards the state as a heinous sin that derails Jewish redemption, whereas the latter, as we shall see, as a miraculous realization confirming the imminence of the Messianic Age.

Non-Zionist Haredim are currently organized around two prominent religious-political parties: Agudat Yisrael and Shas.⁶¹ Although refusing to merge their programmatic agenda with the national goals of the state, these parties use the influence stemming from their large voting base to strengthen

the respective religious institutions and educational networks, and to bargain critical concessions with the Knesset.⁶² Given the nature of the Israeli political system, the ultra-Orthodox parties have been able to wield hefty political power, often ending up as 'kingmakers in multi-party coalitions'. In past and recent years, the Sephardic party Shas backed either right or left governments, 'extracting in exchange major pledges on the welfare benefits many Haredi families rely on'.⁶³ As the religious affairs analyst Yair Sheleg has recently observed, 'the Zionists and the ultra-Orthodox have a deal which gives the latter what they want in order to let the secular continue to rule'.⁶⁴ Even though with continuous tensions and renegotiations, the deal has held for six decades.⁶⁵ The non-Zionist Haredim, however, always keep in mind that their engagement in the state is guided by expediency, rather than real attachment to the national cause. In keeping with the rabbinic tradition, in which every ultra-Orthodox group remains entrenched, religion and politics are two parallel lines that are not supposed to converge until the Messianic time of redemption. Unlike their national-religious counterparts, these Jews 'do not fight in Israel's army, fly its flags or celebrate its national holidays'.⁶⁶

With regard to territorial issues and their political implications, all non-Zionist Haredim agree that the Land was promised to the Jewish people, as a result of their everlasting Covenant with God. But, quite surprisingly, granting a holy status to Eretz Yisrael and a divine right to its possession does not a priori exclude the possibility of negotiating a compromise with the Palestinian authorities. Especially prior to the second Intifada, prominent rabbis of both Agudat Yisrael and Shas endorsed a 'dovish' attitude and were seriously prepared to trade selected parts of Judea and Samaria for the pursuit of a peaceful co-existence with Israel's neighbours. This political stand was theologically underpinned by the normative principle of 'saving a life', which, under particular circumstances, supersedes the commandment to hold on to the Land of Promise in its wholeness.⁶⁷ Ultra-Orthodoxy understands the essence of Judaism as being structured around three core values: the Torah, the Jewish people, and the Land of Israel. For the rabbinic sages, these basic elements relate to each other following a hierarchical criterion. The relevance of the first two elements exceeds that of the third. Accordingly, 'the Land of Israel can be brokered to create an environment in the best interest of the Jewish people as a whole', and to prevent 'a cycle of never-ending warfare with the Arab population'.⁶⁸

In more recent years, however, security concerns have eroded the traditional ultra-Orthodox support for the principle of land for peace, moving many Haredim towards more hawkish positions. After Israeli unilateral withdrawal from the occupied territories intensified rather than diminished the fighting in South Lebanon, Gaza and the West Bank, several voices within the Haredi world agreed that returning further land to create an Arab state on Israel's doorstep would put more Jewish lives at risk rather than protecting them.⁶⁹ That leading rabbis have grown more sceptical about the sincerity of Palestinian intentions has also affected the theological debate. The emphasis soon shifted from the idea that the Torah does not exclude conceding land as a means to bring peace to those biblical commandments stating that Israel should stand alone against the Gentile nations, and never forget the injuries incurred by its enemies [Deut. 25:17].⁷⁰

After having teased out the main differences dividing the two ultra-Orthodox worldviews on the state, it is worth highlighting what these worldviews share. Both anti and non-Zionist Haredim are extremely critical about those aspects of Israeli society they deem detrimental to traditional Judaism. The spiritual vacuum caused by 'the abandonment of the Torah' and Western secularization, they argue, represents the 'root of all evil, and the underlying reason of all the country's problems'.⁷¹ On the other hand, ultra-Orthodoxy is generally perceived by the external world with no less disapproval. Many secular Israelis view its religious customs and regulations as retrograde. Their resentment is also sharpened by the fact that, as well as being exempted from mandatory army draft, the vast majority of non-Zionist Haredim do not hold paid jobs, being essentially subsidised by the state to study the Torah.⁷²

5.3 The Religious Zionist synthesis

As previously noted, Jewish Orthodoxy endorses a quietist stand as it views redemption as being exclusively dependant on God's will. The Jewish people are commanded to remain passive, and fulfill their part of the Covenant by obeying the law and commandments of the Torah. In light of its engagement in the forbidden effort to hasten the end before the appointed time, secular Zionism is judged as a blasphemous and even dangerous usurpation of the divine prerogatives. For Religious Zionism, on the contrary, both the Zionist movement and the State of Israel - in even their present secular framework - are

sanctified for their absolute religious value. Further, redemption is understood as a humanly achievable realization: a process that Zionism initiated, the Jewish people must proactively advance, here and now, by their intra-historical commitment, and God would finally complete. Historical watersheds are often quoted by Religious Zionists as indisputable proofs of the validity of their claims. The reestablishment of the State of Israel in May 1948 was hailed as the literal 'beginning' of the Jewish deliverance (*atehalta de-ge'ulah*). In June 1967, such Messianic expectations were further heightened by the results of the Six Day War. The reunification of the Old City of Jerusalem, the return of the Temple Mount and the Western Wall to Jewish hands, and Israel's territorial expansion in Judea and Samaria were seen as a set of miracles reinforcing the Religious Zionist faith in the imminence of the Messiah.⁷³

Religious Zionism insists on the inalienable right of each and every Jew to settle anywhere within the boundaries of Biblical Israel. This right is also considered a religious duty, which every faithful Jew must fulfill in order to hasten redemption. Any political or diplomatic compromise on Jewish control over the Promised Land, let alone a transfer of even the smallest part of it to a Gentile authority is absolutely prohibited by the Torah, since it would halt or compromise the same process of Jewish salvation.

As we shall see, since 1967 onwards, Religious Zionism offered to bridge the crippling divide between Jewish Orthodoxy and modern nationalism through an original synthesis between three distinct, albeit inherently overlapping concepts: Judaism, Zionism, and Messianism. David Novak defines Judaism as 'the Covenant between God and the people of Israel, which the Torah substantiates'; Zionism as 'the movement for Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel'; and Messianism as 'the hope for God's final redemption of the people of Israel - and along with them all of humankind', a hope which 'roots itself in God's ultimate, Eschatological promise'. Both Zionism and Messianism, adds Novak, would be embedded in the Jewish religious tradition, although quite differently: 'Zionism is the finite task of the Jewish people here and now for the sake of its life in this world'. Messianism would rather be 'the infinite task of God for the sake of the world-yet-beyond'. Religious Zionism intentionally blurs that 'essential distinction between a Jewish human state and the Kingdom of God'.⁷⁴

In the following pages, Religious Zionism will be interpreted as a 'theopolitical' belief system that, by virtue of its remarkable Eschatological thrust and evocative appeal, was able to transform both Rabbinic Orthodoxy and

Zionism. It did so by overstretching the respective doctrinal-ideological confines and advocating a common ground between the two hitherto conflicting identities. From its outset, Religious Zionism presented itself as being 'as traditionally justified as anti-Zionist Orthodoxy - minus its political quietism - and as strongly pro-Israel as secularist Zionism - minus its non-Judaic rationale'.⁷⁵ This unprecedented syncretism between Judaism, Messianism and Zionism is today most vociferously epitomized by the settlers movement known as Gush Emunim ('the Block of the Faithful'), a militant form of religious belonging that fights the cause of Eretz Ysrael politically. Gush Emunim's immediate objective is to expand Jewish inhabitation and sovereignty beyond the Green Line. In this spirit, it dedicates its energies to establishing new outposts and settlements in the West Bank and consolidating the existing ones. In the long run, Gush Emunim aims at the Judaization of Israeli secular society, and the creation of a theocratic state based on the principles and ideals of the Torah. Short and long term programs are closely interrelated, each a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of the other.

5.4 The Kookist triangle

Gush Emunim's distinctive involvement in Israeli politics cannot be fully grasped without considering what Gideon Aran defines as 'Kookism': a 'comprehensive religious-political subculture encompassing the lives of a few thousand cadres who constitute the stable, militant avant-garde among the settlers in the disputed areas'. As an original form of Messianic politics, Kookism is metaphorically described by Aran as a 'triangle', whose cornerstones are Rabbi Kook the father, Rabbi Kook the son, and the Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva in Jerusalem.⁷⁶ The intellectually sophisticated Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook [1865-1935] became the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine under the British Mandate. He is unanimously recognized as the spiritual father of Religious Zionism, a charismatic figure whose biography borders on the hagiographic. The rabbi's thought steered a delicate course between radical innovation and Orthodoxy: his mystical-esoteric speculations remained within the boundaries of the normative tradition, whilst drastically changing it. By turning a passive Messianic hope into a major political drive for resettling the Land of Israel, Rabbi Kook the father closed the 'theological gap' between religious Judaism and secular Jewish nationalism. He transformed part of

rabbinic Orthodoxy from being the erstwhile implacable enemy of Zionism into its most dedicated and loyal ally.⁷⁷

Endowed with neither his father's charismatic halo nor philosophical inventiveness, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook [1891-1982] was nevertheless able to establish his persona as his father's legitimate heir. He represents the indispensable 'medium' through which his father's innovative yet abstruse theology was interpreted, popularized and, more importantly, politicized into a coherent national-religious credo, which later served as ideological base for a social movement.⁷⁸ It was under Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook's spiritual guidance that, in the early 1950s, during a moment of profound crisis engulfing the younger generations of the Orthodox circles, an embryonic version of Gush Emunim took shape: the *Gahelet*, literally meaning 'glowing ember'. This first Religious Zionist vanguard was spurred by the palingenetic thrust to regenerate Israeli polity from its moral decadence, by means of an all-encompassing national-religious revolution.⁷⁹ The *Gahelet* simultaneously sought to 'heal' Zionism from its secularity and 'rescue' Orthodoxy from its political marginality. It did so by capitalizing on the Messianic import associated with the just-born Jewish state.⁸⁰

The last 'leg' of the Kookist triad is the influential Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva: a Torah-based seminar, recognized and funded by the Israeli State, which indoctrinates Gush Emunim's young generations following the Messianic schemes elaborated by the two rabbis Kook. Both spiritual leaders denied any separation between the Israeli state and Judaism, since they considered the profane as 'a mere external manifestation of the inner holy foundation of reality'.⁸¹ Accordingly, Merkaz HaRav sacralizes the state and its government as secular tools in the overall process of salvation, views the IDF as being 'holy', and every year encourages hundreds of its seminarists to undertake military service as a religious imperative. Further, in keeping with the Kookist outlook, as promoted today by prominent rabbis associated with the Merkaz HaRav, the Jewish settlements' presence and activities in the occupied territories are divinely justified, since they manifest and advance the working of providence towards an all-encompassing spiritual redemption of Israel and its land.⁸²

We shall now concentrate on the theological aspects of Kookism – namely, the Mystical-Messianic teachings of Rabbi Kook the father, to analyze later how, under mutated historical and cultural circumstances, these teachings were able to activate their political potentialities.

5.5 The Lurianic lore

Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook's restorative view on the Messianic process can be retraced to the Cabbalistic tradition of Yitzchak Luria Ashkenazi (1534-72), the most influential exponent of the Safed School in Galilee.⁸³ For our purposes here, the complexity of Lurianic Mystical lore has to be reduced to the basic theosophical concepts underpinning the overall doctrine. In particular we shall focus our attention on the idea of the 'Breaking of the Vessels'. This Mystical idea represents the root of a longstanding development within Judaism, which, through Rabbi Kook's intellectual mediation, reached its current manifestations in Jewish Messianism.⁸⁴ Still today, Gush Emunim's theo-political stand hinges upon principles first introduced by Lurianic Mysticism. Luria posited the primordial cosmogony as a twofold act, in which divine self-limitation and contraction (*Tsimtsum*) are necessary premises for divine revelation:

God was compelled to make room for the world by, as it were, abandoning a region within Himself, a kind of mystical primordial space from which He withdrew in order to return to it in the act of creation and revelation. The first act of the Infinite Being is therefore not a step outside but a step inside, a movement of recoil, of falling back upon oneself, of withdrawing into oneself. Instead of emanation we have the opposite, contraction. The God who revealed himself in firm contours was superseded by one who descended deeper into the recesses of His own Being, who concentrated Himself into Himself, and had done so from the very beginning of creation. One is tempted to interpret this withdrawal of God into his own Being in terms of Exile, of banishing Himself from His totality into profound seclusion. Regarded this way, the idea of *Tsimtsum* is the deepest symbol of Exile that could be thought of.⁸⁵

In order for everything other than God to come into existence, he had necessarily to 'exile Himself from boundless infinity to a more concentrated infinity'.⁸⁶ Only after such a voluntary restraint, God emitted beams of divine light into the vacuum He produced, so as to build our world. Nevertheless, this propagation was immediately followed by destruction. Ten vessels were originally conceived to contain God's ten emanations of light (*Sefirot*). These primordial sparks represent the archetypal patterns of perfection upon which the cosmos was meant to take shape. Yet, as the divine lights burst forth all at once, their impact proved too much for the vessels, which were broken and shattered (*Shevirat ha-Kelim*). As a result of this cosmic catastrophe, the sparks of light were dispersed. Some of them returned to their source, whilst others percolated downwards, from the divine realm into the lower depths, to give birth to that imperfect and chaotic world within which mankind also resides.⁸⁷ In keeping with the Lurianic system, Evil (*Din*), rather than a contradictory

entity outside the Godhead, is a principle stemming from His very creative emanation. Evil firstly emerged as 'a residue of the forces released by the initial breaking, which then took shape as the independent, life-hostile other side'.⁸⁸ Having the sparks intermingled with the vicious elements belonging to the lower sphere, deficiency appears to be inherent in everything that exists in nature.⁸⁹ This age of mixture will however persist as long as the original damage is not mended. Following the same logic at the basis of Zoroastrian doctrine of the three ages, Luria envisaged a third and conclusive stage of reparation. The secret aim of creation, and, at the same time, purpose of all human existence, consists in the restoration of what was originally compromised by the primordial catastrophe. Salvation means nothing but a process of cosmic repair (*Tikkun Olan*), which progressively re-integrates the holy sparks into that flawless whole, in which everything occupies its proper space.⁹⁰ Introducing an element of imbalance, defectiveness, and darkness might be therefore conducive to raise the stakes in the cosmic purification. God put in being a flawed world in order to rid Himself of the seeds of Evil: the stronger the other side's manifestations after the original breaking, the greater the chance of returning the world into a clearer and purer harmony.⁹¹ This idea would be subsumed into Rabbi Kook's theological system, which brings the notion of *Tikkun Olan* down to earth, and fully applies it to account for the Jewish nation's historical becoming:

[According to Kook], the 'shattering of the vessels' is not a cosmic catastrophe but, on the contrary, a positive manifestation, a vital step in the steady movement of all reality toward perfection. The Rabbi denies the existence of evil as an independent entity. As a result, he does not see the 'shattering' as the complete negation of 'repair', but rather as an integral part of the restorative process. It is worth suffering all the pangs of the shattering and the ill effects of the destruction in order to bring forth a perfected world.⁹²

It is worth noting that long before Kookism the principles of Lurianic Mysticism already had political application, by providing the ideological base to one of the greatest Jewish movements of mass revolt in the Middle Ages: Sabbatianism, a 'palingenetic community' organized around a charismatic figure (Sabbatai Sevi), and imbued with transformative Messianic longings. It can be convincingly argued that, despite being quite different phenomena in theological and sociological terms⁹³, both Sabbatianism and Kookism do not represent 'wild departures from traditional Judaism as the result of non-Jewish influences'. They are instead religious-political phenomena 'whose origins lay

at the heart of the legitimate tradition, and whose 'heretical' theology developed as a plausible offshoot of accepted concepts'.⁹⁴

5.6 Saving God

Kookism and Lurianic Cabbala intersect at a specific point: the fulfillment of creation, understood as emendation and re-integration of the divine luminaries into their original harmony, is a task which God began, but which humans ought to complete.⁹⁵ It is worth remembering that the Cabbalistic sages prior to Luria viewed redemption as a quietistic process relying on spiritual rectification: the faithful were supposed to amend both the cosmos and their own souls, primarily by keeping faith with the Torah and its commandments.⁹⁶ Although complying with such normative principles, Lurianic Cabbala nevertheless infringed the 'cloister' of pure inwardness and passivity, introducing a truly revolutionary teaching: human active role in the process of cosmic restoration. Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook took that principle to its extreme, completing the transformation of a Mystical doctrine into a blueprint for practical action. Rather than emphasizing the spiritual side of its accomplishments, Kook the father argued that the mission of cosmic repair was to be historically advanced, and there were compelling signs that this should have been done in present time. We shall see that, for Rabbi Kook the father, 'the Zionist undertaking, in all its concreteness', would accomplish the needed collective rectification, since such an undertaking truly reflected 'the Jewish people's response to the divine call'.⁹⁷ Through the politicization of *Tikkun*, the rabbi realized a meaningful inversion 'subject-object', in the roles articulating the structure of traditional Messianism: while for Orthodoxy only God can save humankind, now humankind can effectively contribute to saving God, by actively advancing the process of cosmic reintegration.⁹⁸ This short circuit in the traditional soteriological categories of Judaism also implies the re-evaluation of history as an immanent channel of salvation: redemption no longer depends on an Apocalyptic breakthrough, but on a gradualist process extending back to creation. Rather than capping the End Time, and passively awaiting for God's miraculous intervention, each Jewish generation must therefore fulfill its quota of restorations.⁹⁹ Kook the father bequeathed the Jews with a mundane duty: the progressive gathering and mending of the divine fragments that were scattered to the four corners of the world by the Breaking of the Vessels. Only the Children of Israel can actively redeem the dross of the universe.¹⁰⁰

5.7 A perfect symmetry

According to Luria's Janus-faced cosmogony, the starting point of creation is not contingent upon the Godhead's outward emanation, but rather on His decision to implode on Himself. So as to leave space for the cosmos to expand, God went into exile (*Galut*) from Himself.¹⁰¹ The process of redemption, which was put in motion by the catastrophic Breaking of the Vessels, consists in restoring the scattered, exiled sparks of divinity into their primordial harmony. Deficiency thus became synonymous with God's exile, and fulfillment with the complete *restitutio ad integro* of the cosmic order - a condition of restored plenitude, which also puts an end to God's own seclusion. Luria proposed a powerful image of cosmic exile and redemption, whose symbolic structure mirrored the tension between Jews' historical-political reality and their future aspirations of deliverance:

By connecting the notions of *Galut* and redemption with the central question of the essence of the universe, Luria managed to elaborate a system which transformed the exile of the people of Israel into an exile of the whole world, and the redemption of the people of Israel into a universal, cosmic redemption. The Cabbala succeeded in establishing its predominance over the broad masses of the Jewish people.¹⁰²

After having prepared itself in the 'underground', Luria's teachings emerged, and became widely accepted, in a moment of extreme hardship: the crisis following the expulsion from Spain in 1542.¹⁰³ That collective trauma generated distress within the Jewish communities, but also severely tested their received frameworks of meaning. The authoritative resources of Rabbinic Judaism fell short of accounting for the disaster of the 'new Exodus'. At the same time, attendant persecutions befalling the Jews rendered their desire for deliverance even more acute. As a symbolic prism to interpret reality, Lurianic Mysticism convincingly intervened in that vacuum, projecting the historical crisis onto a cosmic dimension. A movement so highly mystical, individual, and aristocratic turned into a dynamic social force.¹⁰⁴ The reasons for its mass success reside in a theodicy postulating a 'perfect analogy' between the status of God and that of his Chosen. By equating it to that experienced by God himself, the brunt of the exile was re-interpreted as an exception to the universal order: a temporary victory of chaos that would be soon rectified. Through the cosmicization of Israel's exilic status, Lurianic Cabbala allowed the Jews to

perceive themselves as a major force in history, especially when their present powerless indigence and vulnerability disproved that contention.¹⁰⁵

The rehabilitation of Israel through Luria's Mystical devices seems to follow many arguments underpinning the 'scathing theodicy' of the Covenant. The Hebrew prophets charged that, once viewed as divine punishments for having contravened the 'deal' with Yahweh, humiliating defeats and persecutions turned into implicit confirmations of Israel's election, its sense of having been set apart for an all-encompassing mission. By reading national downfalls as uncontested proofs of their patron divinity's power, the Jews learnt how to turn historical miseries into theological triumphs. Although both the Covenantal doctrine and Lurianic Cabbala may be viewed as spiritual resources to cope with the cognitive dissonance (the painful incongruence between 'what is' and 'what ought to be') generated by national disasters and foreign oppression, one critical difference should be observed here. According to the Covenant's principle of conditionality, only 'passive' practices such as repentance and righteous conduct might heal the Jewish soul, restore divine favour, and therefore advance Israel's redemption. The Lurianic Mysticism posits instead that the rectification of Jewish exilic deficiency depends on human mundane agency. The Jewish people itself can turn present deficiency into a final and everlasting Messianic triumph. Their gradualist process of gathering and lifting up the scattered sparks to their original status of harmony becomes a practical means to re-establish a congruence between outer historical reality and inner belief. As a unique offshoot of Lurianism, Rabbi Kook's authoritative theology is built on a mythic structure which replicates

the historical experience of Judaism in our time and place and, at the same time, responds to its frustrations. From now on, the Jewish national condition, subsumed under the old symbols of Exile and Redemption, becomes a hint of heavenly condition. Thus, Exile is viewed as alienation of the sacred from itself, whereas Redemption is seen as resulting from its return to the recognition of the roots of its essence. This belief has a built-in activist potential, in that the believer is entrusted with the mission of sharing in cosmic events. There is a need for *Tikkun* – the return of the sacred to its sources, and the bringing of the profane into the sacred.¹⁰⁶

Lurianic Mysticism further reinforces the Covenantal ideal portraying the Chosen as bearers of absolute universality. The Jewish restorative task not only advances Israel's economy of salvation, but also that of all Gentile nations. *Tikkun's* legitimacy and over-determination rely on the assumption that the 'perfect analogy' is transitive, that is, it works in either direction: on the one hand, wherever Israel is exiled, the divine source of order (*Shekinah*) goes with

it, and therefore the entire world is out of joint; on the other, once the Jews are restored to Palestine, their national independence re-gained, and their holy temple re-built, the whole cosmos, not just Israel, is set to rights.¹⁰⁷ Israel's historically contingent situation becomes a barometer whose variations signal the status of creation as a whole.¹⁰⁸ The image of a Jewish national renaissance as eternal, universal and absolute *telos* is the theological centerpiece of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook's thought:

All the civilizations of the world will be renewed by the renaissance of our spirit. All quarrels will be resolved, and our revival will cause all life to be luminous with the joy of fresh birth. All religions will don new and precious raiment, casting away whatever is soiled, abominable, and unclean; they will unite in imbibing of the dew of the Holy Lights, that were made ready for all mankind at the beginning of time in the well of Israel. The active power of Abraham's blessing to all the peoples of the world will become manifest, and it will serve as the basis of our renewed creativity in Eretz Ysrael.¹⁰⁹

Rabbi Kook viewed the Jewish people as a 'microcosm containing within itself the entire general teleological development of history'.¹¹⁰ Although he repeatedly refrained from endorsing brutal means, even for the pursue of the loftiest ideal in an imperfect and impure world¹¹¹, the rabbi put forward a universalist plan of national renaissance, which proved to be inherently prone to particularism and ethnocentrism. By claiming to redeem far more than the Jewish people, that plan might, at best, inspire arrogance and contempt towards the rest of humanity which has not yet been illuminated or, at worst, justify ruthless action against what is considered soiled, abominable and unclean. The line between the two outcomes is notoriously blurred.

5.8 Saints despite themselves

Long before the establishment of its State, Rabbi Kook the father hailed Zionism not just as a mere nationalist movement advocating the liberation of a people 'who for two thousand years had lived as a barely tolerated minority in a precarious, dispersed existence'.¹¹² Zionism was rather recognized as a 'sacred instrument' through which God was furthering His schemes of cosmic salvation in present historical reality. If returning to and settling the Land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was a primary obligation of each and every devout Jew, helping Zionism meant not granting one's support to an untraditional or even anti-traditionalist movement, but acting in full accordance with the divine will:

God wants the children of Israel to return to their home in order to establish a Jewish sovereign state in which Jews could live according to the laws of Torah and halakha. (...) Secular Zionists may think they do it for political, national or socialist reasons, but in fact the actual reason for them coming to resettle in Israel is a religious Jewish spark ('Nitzotz') in their soul, planted by God. Without their knowledge, they are contributing to the divine scheme. The role of Religious Zionists is to help them to establish a Jewish state and turn the religious spark in them into a great light. They should show them that the real source of Zionism and the longed-for Zion is Judaism and teach them Torah with love and kindness. In the end, they will understand that the laws of Torah are the key to true harmony and a socialist state (not in the Marxist meaning) that will be a light for the nations and bring salvation to the world.¹¹³

Within the schemes of Kookism, Zionism is no longer a blasphemous offence to the basic principles of rabbinic Judaism, but a movement for concrete redemption in our time, which springs directly from a sacred source. Israel's national revival by natural, historical effort represents an opportunity to take a worldly stand, and shake off 'the dust of exile' from the Chosen.¹¹⁴ On this ground, salvation became partially accomplished in May 1948, with the creation of the Zionist state. This does not represent a mere secular institution, but a Messianic realization: the expression of God's will and living proof of His providential intervention in history. The state of Israel, as envisaged by Rabbi Kook the father, is 'the pedestal of God's throne in this world', a concrete nexus between earth and heaven.¹¹⁵

On a closer look, however, Kookism might also be recognized as an astute attempt to re-appropriate the prerogatives and achievements of secular politics within the sacred, and therefore resolve the contradictions between the two dimensions in favour of the latter. In this sense, Rabbi Kook's revolutionary approach toward both Zionism and Orthodox Judaism has been termed as a 'theology of the profane': a highly sophisticated, original and ambitious intellectual effort undertaken by a religious mind, to come to terms with the threatening accomplishments of Western secularity - in particular, those modern ideologies such as Nationalism and Socialism, which had 'permeated Judaism, carrying off many of the best and the brightest'.¹¹⁶ Zwi Werblowsky defined Kook the father as an 'audacious Talmudist and Cabbalist who tried to formulate a theology of secularity and modernity in the category of the pre-modern [Judaic] tradition'.¹¹⁷ Once he migrated in Palestine to take up his post as rabbi of Jaffa, Kook had to rationalize, in theological terms, the inconvenient reality that the Messianic dream of rebuilding Israel was being carried out quite successfully by the kibbutz movement – a socialist movement based on agricultural-collectivist life-style.¹¹⁸ Some of its members were oblivious to Judaism, whereas others utterly rejected the Torah and vilified its

commandments. The Rabbi claimed to possess a much deeper insight into the nature and deeds of the first pioneers in the Land of the Fathers than the pioneers themselves.¹¹⁹ Despite their unrighteous conduct, these early day Zionists were modern 'saints', unwittingly fulfilling ancient Israel's redemptive plan:

[Rabbi Kook] contemplated the idea that the ultimate religious redemption might be preceded by practical developments related to the more profane realities of emigration to the Land of Israel and other preparatory steps, all in the secular realm. Kook developed this idea by suggesting a comprehensive theory within which it could be fitted. The pioneers coming to Palestine are indeed highly hostile to the Jewish religious tradition and are motivated, according to their own understanding, by secular ideological considerations, which are basically alien to the religious structures of Judaism. The legitimacy given by them to their actions is similarly not related to religious sources, but draws its inspiration from non-Jewish European revolutionary ideas as Nationalism or Socialism. Yet, Rabbi Kook argued, this subjective understanding of their own motives is only one side of the picture. In the divine cosmic order, where every detail has its own place and *telos*, the true meaning of a person's action may be unknown to himself. The same applies to the Zionist pioneers. They may subjectively think they are motivated by secular, political ideas, but truly they are acting within a cosmic scheme of a divine will, in which their seemingly secular and even atheistic motivation is nothing else than an external cover for the true meaning of their action as related to God's redemptive structure. These people may contribute toward the ultimate Messianic coming even while they deny it; hence they have to be seen as tools and vessels in the hands of Divine Providence. Unbeknownst to themselves, they serve the labour of the Divine. It is the objective meaning of their project that is important, not their subjective motivation nor their external deeds. (...) In this way, the resettlement of the Land of Israel, even by blasphemous atheists, is a step on the road to salvation. The revival of the Hebrew language - an anathema to the Orthodox traditionalist, who saw in the process a profanation of the Holy Tongue, which should be used only for matters divine, is likewise a landmark toward redemption.¹²⁰

Kook's underlying argument is that behind the religiously neutral or even anti-religious Zionist revival is hidden the revival of the holy, as 'the highest degree of sacredness always resides in the innermost part of the profane'.¹²¹ The rabbi however supplies a theological system that follows dialectic subtleties reminiscent of Hegelian theory known as the 'cunning of reason' or 'heterogenesis of the ends'.¹²² Hegel's philosophical approach to historical becoming postulates a critical cleavage between the subjective intentions of individual acting and its objective outcomes: 'One may play an effective role in a sequence of events helping to move matters along and even struggling toward a certain end, without grasping the inner logic of the events, their true meaning or real consequences'.¹²³ Nevertheless, the final realizations of the cosmic-restorative drama - which secular Zionists are advancing by unconsciously laying its earthly foundations - will eventually correct all previous misconceptions and put everything under the right perspective. Kook the father

charged that, in the fullness of time, whilst the Jewish spiritual rebirth takes place and a theocratic rule permeates Eretz Ysrael, the 'inherent holiness of Zionism will ultimately surface to the level of explicit consciousness'.¹²⁴ The rabbi went even further, to suggest that one day the truly religious leaning of the Zionist enterprise would be acknowledged not only by its secular advocates, but also by its fiercest detractors within the Orthodox camp. He supported such a provocative contention by deploying the evocative parable about the construction of the First Temple. It is known that simple workmen erected the Holy of Holies, the most sacred inner sanctum, whose access was limited to the High Priest once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The sanctity and purity of the Temple took full effect only after the construction was completed. The same is true, argued Kook, for the Jewish state: its building through non-holy hands enables the redemptive process to take place, and, once the Zionist endeavour is over, the Israeli state will be sanctified and perfected through its absolute Judaization.¹²⁵ In both instances - the establishment of the Holy Temple and the state - a gloss of sacredness ought to be granted to all of those 'simple workers' who bear the bricks without divining the Messianic import of their work.¹²⁶ By considering the finalization of the dialectic process, religious Judaism 'should grasp the underlying meaning of Zionism and discern, beyond its external, secular forms, the divine spark evident at its heart'.¹²⁷ This idea still undergirds the approach of mainstream Gush Emunim towards Zionist politics and institutions.

5.9 Eretz Ysrael

The emotional connection to Eretz Ysrael impacts on the behaviour of almost all religious Jews, whether advocates or opponents of the Zionist enterprise. The Jewish visceral tie to the Land of the Fathers is central not only to countless religious sermons and theological treatises, but also finds a respectable place in the Independence Day prayer book, which is read by both observant and non-observant Israelis. Quite paradoxically, the uncompromising sacredness of the Land of Promise does not rest on a definitive description of its territorial extension, lacking clarification in the Torah of a unanimous set of geographical boundaries.¹²⁸ Eretz Ysrael being one of the Covenant's most crucial aspects, the countless discrepancies about its borders reflect the variety of the formulations that the agreement between God and His Chosen received in the Hebrew Scriptures.¹²⁹

The Biblical source which is often quoted to legitimize Israel's territorial ownership as a divinely ordained inheritance (and, equally, to oppose any diplomatic compromise over it) is Numbers 33: 53-54: 'and you shall take possession of the Land and settle it, for I have given the Land to you to possess it'. Many Orthodox Jews, whether in favour or against Zionism, understand this verse as normatively binding - that is, as a commandment to conquer and control the Land of Promise, 'not to leave it in the hands of any other people or allow it to lie in waste'.¹³⁰ Even for Haredim, there is a tension between these halakhic arguments urging the faithful to settle the Land and, on the other hand, the distinctive Orthodox ban against any restoration *en masse* in Palestine in pre-Messianic times.¹³¹ Kook the father solved such a contradiction by applying an unconditional understanding of the Covenantal promise to his historical reality – a reality in which the Zionist project was gaining momentum. Rather than being dismissed as literary heritage or poetry, the biblical passages enshrining the Jewish title to Eretz Ysrael became 'a living and legal document' and, at the same time, 'a blueprint for the settlement action' which was necessary for speeding up redemption and bringing on the Messiah.¹³²

Kook bestowed the highest degree of religious meaning on Eretz Ysrael, viewing it as the essential feature of the Jewish nationhood in its becoming. To him, the organic connection with the Land of the Fathers was the 'sacred quality' setting Israel apart from the Gentile nations, and therefore the spiritual source the Chosen People drew their very life from.¹³³ That collective link could not be easily severed without undermining the foundations of the Jewish soul. Hence, returning to Zion was the primary religious duty that every Jew in the Diaspora was supposed to fulfil lest he betray his true self:

Jewish original creativity, whether in the realm of ideas or in the arena of daily life and action, is impossible except in Eretz Ysrael. A Jew cannot be as devoted and true to his own ideas, sentiments, and imagination in the Diaspora as he can in Eretz Ysrael. Revelations of the Holy, of whatever degree, are relatively pure in Eretz Ysrael; outside it, they are mixed with dross and much impurity. (...) In the Holy Land man's imagination is lucid and clear, clean and pure, capable of receiving the revelations of Divine Truth and of expressing in life the sublime meaning of the ideal of the sovereignty of holiness; there the mind is prepared to understand the light of prophecy and to be illuminated by the radiance of the Holy Spirit. In Gentile lands the imagination is dim, clouded with darkness and shadowed with unholiness, and it cannot serve as the vessel for the outpouring of the Divine Light.¹³⁴

According to the Religious Zionist views, exilic life within the Gentile societies is accountable for the disintegration and malformation of the Jewish

soul. Although they might respect the Torah and its commandments and thus perceive themselves as pious and devout, the Jewish people outside the Land inevitably lead a distorted and unholy life.¹³⁵ Only a national revival in Eretz Ysrael can extricate the Jews from the defectiveness deriving from being scattered to the four corners of the world. The re-ingathering in the Land of the Fathers heals the Chosen from exilic separation and individualism, by restoring them to the original unity, integrity and holiness.¹³⁶ What Kook openly attacks here is the Haredi quietist approach to the redemptive process - an approach that, according to the rabbi, accommodated the Jewish life in the Diaspora, by instructing the faithful to accept the powerlessness and shortcomings associated with it. The rabbi's revolutionary break with ultra-Orthodoxy consists in having conceived a return en masse to Zion not 'as a mere Messianic postulate to be carried out in God's own good time', but as 'an immediate imperative for every Jewish person'.¹³⁷

Nevertheless, this radical subversion against the traditional passive approach to redemption could fully emerge only after secular Zionism, with its remarkable this-worldly achievements, opened new and unexpected avenues for Jewish identity and religiosity. A real turning point was reached once Kook himself immigrated to the Holy Land in 1904. All the cardinal ideas forming his eclectic theo-political system – namely, a 'comprehensive vision of Jewish rebirth, Messianic activism, and belief in the organic rootedness of the national idea into the divine idea'¹³⁸ – precipitated together as Kook took pastoral responsibility over some of the first Jewish farming colonies, as a newly appointed rabbi of Jaffa. As already noted, the rabbi endowed the kibbutzim project with a sacred gloss even if its actors did not acknowledge it. Although being motivated by early Zionism's socialist and, at times, antireligious principles, the pioneers were promptly identified as members of the generation heralding the Messiah. The divine spirit imbued their strivings despite them: through their dwelling, settling and working the soil of Eretz Ysrael, the pioneers were 'heroes' furthering God's purpose of redemption, and, simultaneously, bringing about the wholesale regeneration of the Jewish people.¹³⁹ In the words of Shlomo Zaiman Shragai, the spiritual leader of the Mizrachi movement and, later, Jerusalem's first elected mayor:

The special quality of Eretz Ysrael is not available to those who keep away from it, nor to those who merely breathe its air, but only to its workers, to the farmers blessed by the Lord. That is why we were commanded: 'And when you shall come into the Land and shall have planted' (Leviticus 19:23). [Working the land of Eretz Ysrael] awakens the divine in us and brings us to spiritual yearning and

longing for the living God, to contemplation, thought, and faith. In order for individuals in this nation to understand this and lead lives based on labour, a fundamental and radical change is required in the soul. The lives we became used to over two thousand years must be eradicated to implant love for labour, from which we have been torn and detached throughout.¹⁴⁰

To the Religious Zionist mind, an authentic return to the source of Judaism necessitates the empowering experience of manual labour and productivity within the sacred space of Eretz Ysrael. By meticulously subtracting the land of inheritance from the surrounding chaos of the desert, the settler becomes a 'redeemed Jew working in a redeemed Jewish world': a reborn man who had overcome the *Galut* mentality with all its limitations and misgivings.¹⁴¹ The redemption of the Jewish people is therefore intimately connected to the humanly carried-out redemption of the Land. This contravenes and reverses one of the basic tenets of Orthodoxy, according to which Jews cannot make *aliyah*, let alone work on the Land before the expiation of their sins is completed. Kook goes as far as to say that the Jewish presence and productivity in the land where God dwells represents the highest form of *teshuvah* (repentance).¹⁴² Redemption comes to be primarily seen as a physical-mundane task, rather than a purely spiritual process based on the observance of the Torah and its precepts.¹⁴³ Gush Emunim activist-believers never abandon the moorings of Jewish Orthodoxy, as with scrupulous dedication they fulfil the countless halakhic norms distinguishing an undoubtedly Torah-centred lifestyle. Nevertheless, an utmost degree of fanaticism is shown whenever the injunction to conquer and settle in the Land of the Patriarchs is considered. That Biblical commandment overrides all the others.¹⁴⁴ The obsessive attachment to the hills of Judea and Samaria, observes Aran, narrowed Gush Emunim's understanding of Judaism to 'one focal point of hyper intensity':

At present, the linchpin of religious fulfilment is the Land. At one time the critical medium for serving the Creator was yeshiva study; today it is settlement. Namely settlement of the Land of Israel, by assuming an all-inclusive and near-exclusive character, has gradually rendered the radical doctrine narrow and one-dimensional. The idea of annexing Judea and Samaria becomes the medium of religious performance, which is supposed to exhaust the gist of Jewish religiosity. On the one hand, one isolated precept is inflated to grand status; the commandment attached to settlement takes over and replaces all other commandments, to become the very accomplishment of the newly defined Judaism. And on the other hand, the value on which the redemption of the Jewish people and the entire universe depends is inadvertently reduced to the status of just one precept.¹⁴⁵

As already noted, the theological foundations of Judaism rest on three components, which form a sort of unified, holy and indivisible whole: the Torah

of Israel, the People of Israel, and the Land of Israel (*Torul Yisrael, Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael*).¹⁴⁶ Haredim decry Gush Emunim members for focusing too much of their own spiritual and material resources on the establishment of new settlements and outposts, and therefore according disproportionate weight to the Land at the expenses of the Torah. Whereas many secular Zionists believe that the territorial fetishism driving the settlement project in the West Bank turns out to be extremely counterproductive for the safety of the people of Israel. The response to such accusations is often twofold. Gush Emunim activist-believers maintain that an excessive love for Eretz Yisrael hinders neither the unity nor the equilibrium within the triad of Jewish values, as such love encompasses and completes both the Torah and the people of Israel. This assertion is further reinforced by the argument that 'in various historical situations, one of the three components may emerge as more critical than the other two; and in our generation, the Land obviously merits premier status'.¹⁴⁷ Being understood as indisputable fulfilments of the classic Messianic vision, the establishment of the Jewish state in May 1948 and, to a higher degree, its territorial expansion following the Six Day War were the two key intra-historical realizations capable of shifting the balance within the triadic relationship, favouring a one-dimensional understanding of Judaism. In the eyes of many devout Jews, in June 1967 the territories west of the Jordan were not occupied, but rather 'liberated' in a patently miraculous way. Therefore they could not ever be taken away from Jewish hands, as 'the Holy One, blessed be He, does not perform miracles in vain'.¹⁴⁸ An almost carnal attachment to Judea and Samaria took precedence over the traditional Orthodox emphasis on moral rectification, becoming 'the axis of a new religion'.¹⁴⁹ This unprecedented form of Zionist Judaism based on uncompromising irredentist policies emerged from the conviction that a divine power was 'hovering' over all Jewish Israelis and forcing them to advance, in accordance with predetermined schemes, toward the attainment of full redemption.¹⁵⁰

This shift in religious paradigms confirms our assumption that not only can Messianic beliefs affect human predisposition towards reality, but also that historical occurrences might conversely impact on and alter the inner structure of such beliefs. Before June 1967, the normative consensus within mainstream Orthodoxy was more or less unanimous in seeing the Jewish claim to the Land of inheritance as being entirely conditional upon subservience to God through the respect of the Torah and its norms (as codified by the rabbinic authorities). As a result of the Messianic reading of 'the war of liberation', a new approach

gained momentum within ultra-Orthodoxy. For many of the pious, the Land of Israel and its maximalist colonization became the centralizing and unifying dogma to reassert their Jewishness.¹⁵¹

As a belief system, Kookism blends together national, religious, and cosmic renaissance, providing the faithful with a crucial role in the material advancement of such a conjoint process. Conquest, settlement and practical labour in the Land are essential to bring about Israel's national-religious revival and heal once and for all the disease of *Galut* in the Jewish soul. But, in a parallel manner, the performance of those tasks forwards *Tikkun Olan*, the cosmic rectification from which the entire universe benefits. From the physical link with Eretz Ysrael emanates a spiritual force capable of 'reversing the powers of darkness and raising them to the highest vaults of holiness'.¹⁵² By holding on to Judea and Samaria and toiling their sacred soil, Gush Emunim settlers believe they are releasing the 'sparks of light' that, after the initial breaking of the vessels, were imprisoned in that cosmic subjugation mirroring the exile of Israel. The divine is omnipresent in Eretz Ysrael, and its essence can be progressively liberated through manual labour. In so doing, the settlers can claim to be helping God to restore order over chaos.

The remarkable degree of Gush Emunim's political militancy is an inevitable outcome of the pronounced practical-empirical dimension of its territorial Messianism - which, in turn, stems directly from Rabbi Kook's cabbalistic teachings emphasizing the materialization of the redemptive ideal in external reality.¹⁵³ Annexing more land or establishing new settlements and outposts in the midst of the Palestinian population are 'objectives of religious yearning', whose accomplishment is meant to hasten the coming of the Messianic age. Nevertheless, as Aran explains, these enterprises are also based on a set of liturgies that, once correctly performed, can uplift the believers closer to the Godhead and solve, *hic et nunc*, the discrepancy between their two levels of consciousness: 'the inner world dominated by the exhilarating religious hope of redemption' (the future fulfilment or 'what will be' according to their faith) and 'the frustrating outer world in which they must face a historical reality only partially redeemed' (the present deficiency or 'what is').¹⁵⁴ Put differently, the settlement enterprise in Eretz Ysrael is a sacred ritual – or as Aran defines it, a 'medium of religious performance' - capable of actualizing the redemptive ideal in the present, rather than exclusively promoting its advent in the future. On similar grounds, Uriel Tal sees Gush Emunim's activism in the occupied territories as being embedded on an epiphanic and all-encompassing form of

'mystical-realism'.¹⁵⁵ This 'organic', 'totalizing', and 'invigorating' communion between the activist-believers, the Jewish national ideal, and the sacredness of the Land unfolds in the process of redemption, here and now:

The mystical component of the union is said to be experienced in reality, while reality is said to be experienced in the mystique of being. Both are to be sensed in living action, in the joy of the devotional fulfilment of a total normative commitment. (...) One of the major expressions of the duality of 'mystical realism' is found in the intertwining of the need for personal growth with the commitment to national expansionism. Both reflect a deeply felt urge to escape from a sense of confinement; both are seen as a means to achieving a closer, truer, more authentic participation in the cosmic dimensions of one's concrete existence; both embody the act of the purgation of the soul and of the purification of the Land; both symbolize the union of time - the Messianic future realized now - and of space - the political sovereignty over greater Palestine realized here. Eternity is reflected in current time while cosmology is reflected in the settled Land. The conquest of wider borders transcends the limitations of time, while the bestowal of eternal holiness upon the present confirms the absolute consecration of historical sites, soil, trees, stones, walls, waters, tombstones and burial plots. The individual, the pious, the devoted, is seized by rapturous zeal, yet also by a sense of bliss, joy, happiness, or overflowing light and radiance; one's entire being longs to fuse in glorious communion with peers, congregation, community, settlement, movement, people, and nation. At the same time, divine inspiration emanates from the Land. The Land embodies God's sublime presence with overpowering clarity, with beauty and glory. One is neither stricken dumb with amazement, nor overwhelmed by awe and rapture. Rather, this is an activating, invigorating, and exciting ecstasy, an exaltation and rapture of ultimate union with the Land, the Nation, and Jewish statehood. Thus, it is only through natural vitality, through the participation in the cosmic energy that pulsates in the holiness of the Land, that the divine purpose can be realized. Profane action and divine creation, physical power and divine might have now become forms of worship and sacrifice not less than the ordinary ritual ceremonies. The devotional settler on recently conquered land is possessed by his Messianic zeal, while his zeal transforms the conquest into redemption, and temporary borders into eternal horizons of possessing the Holy Land by inheritance. (...) The sacred symbol has been transformed into substance and the substance has been elevated to the realm of the sacred. (...) Pious, devotional believers no longer stand at a distance in respect to themselves, to the Land, to the Nation or to the State; they cease to accept the multiplicity of meanings and the complexity of existence. An all-inclusive totality reduces every phenomenon to its singular level of signification, creating a feeling of absolute certainty, of divine justification, of joy and of peace amidst an agonizing historical reality of antagonism and conflict.¹⁵⁶

It is quite easy to infer from Tal's words the reasons why, in the eyes of many pious settlers, the territories in the West Bank are not illegally occupied, but liberated and redeemed. Eretz Ysrael's borders and the objects of devotion they contain – such as sacred sites considered as the 'cradle of the nation' or the holy tombs of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs - are beyond diplomatic commerce or historical contingency.¹⁵⁷ Further, the master of the universe has his own political agenda of maximalist colonization that no earthly politics can supersede, even when such politics are legitimately decided by the Zionist state itself, rather than being imposed by 'nations of uncircumcised heart'. For Rabbi

Zvi Yehuda Kook, 'any declaration or deed by any government in the world, including that of Israel, which contests our hold on the territories liberated in the holy war, has no validity and is therefore to be considered null and void'.¹⁵⁸ In Gush Emunim's mystical-realistic worldview and undertakings, there is no room for retreat or compromise: 'its battle cry is "not one inch" and its watchword is "do or die"'.¹⁵⁹ It is worth underscoring that the Religious Zionist resistance against 'trading land for peace' is not uniquely motivated by the alleged Biblical value of some remote and barren hillocks, but by considerations of cosmic-universalist import. Many diplomatic negotiators and peacemakers often miss out this essential level of understanding, underestimating the far-reaching impact of the mythical-religious forces and interests at stake. Undermining the integrity of Eretz Ysrael, even through a minimal return of land, would halt and reverse the process of cosmic restoration, giving control back to the forces of darkness. According to Hagi Ben Artzi - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's brother in law and Gush Emunim radical member - to remove one single settlement from Judea or Samaria would amount to set the entire universe out of joint.¹⁶⁰

As already mentioned, the Messianic plan implemented in the soil of Eretz Ysrael saves far more than the Jewish people. This distinctive universalistic pretention reaches the grotesque in the public statements of Rabbi Moshe Levinger – the prominent Gush Emunim spiritual leader who spearheaded the first illegal settlement activities in old city of Hebron.¹⁶¹ According to Levinger, promoting the extension of Israeli sovereignty to Judea and Samaria (and, if possible, to all the occupied territories) represents 'a blessing for all mankind', Arab Palestinians included:

Jewish settlements in the midst of local population centres are motivated by feelings of respect and concern for the Palestinians' future. Consequently if we meet the Arabs' demand for withdrawal, we will only encourage their degeneration and moral decline, whereas enforcing the Israeli national will on the Arabs will foster a religious revival among them, eventually to be expressed in their spontaneous desire to join in the reconstruction of the Third [Jewish] Temple. We [the Israelis] must penetrate the Kasbahs of cities in Judea and Samaria and drive our Stakes therein for the good of the Arabs themselves.¹⁶²

On a similar note, Hanan Porat - another hardcore advocate of the national-religious cause of Eretz Ysrael - posed this rhetorical question to his followers:

What are the nations around us rejoicing about? Is this some kind of masochism? Our neighbours are rejoicing not only because of God's greatness but also of the very fact that they have merited being subdued beneath our feet. Subjugation to the once and future Kingdom of Israel causes happiness in the whole Land of Israel.¹⁶³

Empirical findings suggest that mainstream Gush Emunim never explicitly referred to violent means as a legitimate solution to the Palestinian issue.¹⁶⁴ The official line of the movement promotes peaceful coexistence with local non-Jewish populations. However, time and again, the logic of the unique and chosen people embodying and implementing a universal vision of redemption has fully shown its potentials for stirring and justifying religious zealotry and violence. This appears to be the case especially when Palestinians refuse to 'rejoice' under the Jewish subjugation or whenever a political-diplomatic compromise over Land of Israel is in sight.

5.10 The Messianic Age

As noted in the first section of this study, the concept of utopia, in its literal meaning 'no place', finds no direct application in classic Messianic thought, given the overemphasized physical and territorial dimension of the latter. Deliverance can be final only when all the Jewish tribes are restored to the geographical areas where they once belonged. Without that return journey towards that precise location, redemption fails to reach its supreme status. The Jewish national revival, whose realization marks the pinnacle of that process, also takes place unambiguously within the sacred enclosure of Eretz Ysrael.¹⁶⁵ That being said, what stands out as being paradigmatically utopian in Jewish Messianism is the promise of a future aeon, in which all present limitations will be overcome. In a famous passage in the Book of Lamentations [5:21], the prophets call upon Israel to 'renew its days as of old'. This call ensues from the destruction of its holy site, the end of independent political sovereignty, and the exile of its people. Given the gravity of the national catastrophe, the future renewal cannot represent a mere restoration of an idealized historical past.¹⁶⁶ It must rather project a kind of perfection, harmony and peace that, being not subject to further disproof or challenge, can only belong to heaven. Put differently, Jewish Messianic thought remains ambiguously committed to both the mundane-physical dimension and the transcendental one.

Nevertheless, the appeal exerted by the definitiveness of the Messianic ideal seems to matter more than the terms of its practical implementation once the final stage is reached. In the Biblical and Talmudic passages, the daily life flourishing in the Messianic Age is visualized as subscribing to a broad and likewise vague set of values:

The last days will be incomparably richer than the first, so as to represent a different and altogether unprecedentedly higher order of reality in that 'the land shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord as water covers the sea' [Isaiah 11:9]. (...) Located in Zion, having its capital in a restored Jerusalem, and ruled by the scions of the ideal house of David, the state will be the incorporation of righteousness. Men themselves will possess only good inclinations [Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 52a]. They will be infused with the spirit of the Lord and the spirit of learning, in contrast to the ignorance and partiality of the present. In social terms, the Messianic era will be one of abundance and fertility [Joel 4:18], marked also by health, human longevity, and the absence of disease. Man will enjoy the fruit of his own labour: 'They shall not plant and another eat' [Isaiah 65:22]. 'In that day - declares the Lord of Hosts - you will be inviting each other to the shade of vines and fig trees' [Zechariah 3:10].¹⁶⁷

As repeatedly noted, this Messianic fulfilment does not concern the Jewish people alone, as the restored House of Israel will serve as 'source of inspiration for the improved life of mankind in general, so that all nations shall share in the blessings of peace, the rule of morality, and the overthrow of the wicked and perverted'.¹⁶⁸ In the last days, all the Gentile nations will assemble 'in the midst of Jerusalem, to pay homage to the name of the Jews' God'.¹⁶⁹ So as to be worthy of the cosmic vision it advocates, Israel must constantly lead the way by example, through the cleaving to the religious laws.¹⁷⁰ The Jewish yearning for purity, righteousness and holiness is appeased in the final act of the redemptive drama, which can also be regarded as the fulfilment of Israel's part of the Covenant (its commitment to dwell alone and become a holy nation). The Messianic age is crowned by the establishment of a third and last Commonwealth¹⁷¹ - a Jewish polity in which every single aspect is ordained in the Torah and its commandments. In other words, political and spiritual revivals come indissolubly together. Israel's national rebirth entails entering a stage of homeostasis, where knowledge of the divine is attainable in its fullness.¹⁷²

5.11 A 'Torahcratic' republic

Being embedded in the same Messianic tradition, both Haredim and Religious Zionists share the hope for the establishment of an End Time Jewish theocracy. What they fiercely dispute is the timing and methods of its accomplishment.¹⁷³ In keeping with their Eschatological standpoint, Haredim object the idea of any Jewish state (be it secular or theocratic) prior to the coming of the Messiah. In particular, the eventuality of Torah-based polity is regarded as a 'contradiction in terms'. Even if it were to be run according to the halakhic law, such a state, having been established by human rather than divine

intercession, would paradoxically defile the Torah – as a rebellion against one of its fundamental norms not to hasten the end before the appointed time.¹⁷⁴ For Religious Zionists, on the contrary, it is no longer necessary to wait for the Messiah after May 1948. They discerned in the establishment of the State of Israel ‘the finger of God’ and ‘the first flowering of Jewish redemption’. Having regained national independence was described as a miraculous event, a divine overflow descending from Heaven to signal the imminence of the Messianic age. Following the teaching of Rabbi Kook the father through the mediation of his son, Religious Zionists raised an intra-historical and political realization (such as the just born Jewish nation) to the level of the sacred.¹⁷⁵ However, despite being imbued with sanctity and Messianic gleam, both the Zionist state and its secular society were considered as provisional entities, still waiting for a completion.

Abraham Yehuda Kook sketched the quintessential traits of that completion almost three decades before the creation of the State of Israel. In a cornerstone speech of 1920, the rabbi highlighted the Messianic-political ideal that a Jewish polity should epitomize by opposing that ideal to its very antithesis. An ordinary state based on the Western values of democracy, pluralism, and popular sovereignty argued Kook, amounts to no more than a ‘large insurance company’, where

the myriad ideas that are the crown of human vitality remain hovering above, not touching it. [But] this is not the case regarding a state that is ideal in its foundation, in whose being is engraved the supreme ideal content that is, truly, the greatest happiness of the individual. This state is supreme in the scale of happiness, and this state is our state, the State of Israel, the foundation of God’s throne in the world. Its entire aim is that ‘God be one and His Name one’ (Zech. 14, 9). For this is, truly, the supreme happiness.¹⁷⁶

Some detected in Kook’s vision of the future Jewish state unmistakable traces of that ‘idealist-utopian’ strand which is traditionally associated with the philosophy of Plato, Rousseau, and Hegel, and quite opposed to the ‘rational pragmatism’ which instead underpins Locke’s understanding of the social contract (a liberal paradigm of government, based on democratic rights and form of representation, which found its first direct application in the US Constitution of 1787).¹⁷⁷ On a deeper level, the spiritual idealism that imbues Kook’s political theology reminds one a great deal of the Rousseauian ‘general will’. According to Jacob L. Talmon, that concept advocates social harmony and unanimity, but through an underlying ‘ambiguity’, which is at the same time both ‘fruitful’ and ‘dangerous’:

Rousseau's thinking is dominated by a highly fruitful but dangerous ambiguity. On the one hand, the individual is said to obey nothing but his own will; on the other, he is urged to conform to some objective criterion. The contradiction is resolved by the claim that this external criterion is his better, higher, or real self, man's inner voice, as Rousseau calls it. Hence, even if constrained to obey the external standard, man cannot complain of being coerced, for in fact he is merely being made to obey his own true self. He is thus still free, indeed freer than before. Every exercise of the general will constitutes a reaffirmation of man's freedom. The final aim [of Rousseau's thinking] is therefore not the self-expression of the individual, the deployment of his particular facilities and the realization of his own and unique mode of existence, but the loss of the individual in the collective entity by taking on its colour and principle of existence. The aim is to train men to 'bear with docility the yoke of public happiness', in fact to create a new type of man, a purely political creature, without any particular private or social loyalties, any partial interests, as Rousseau would call them.¹⁷⁸

Kook's political theology borders on the Rousseauian concept of general will in that the rabbi reconciled individual freedom and happiness with an external and absolute truth – a transcendental truth that, once discovered by the religious mind, cannot be honestly refused. Conformity to that truth alone qualifies for membership to the Jewish polity: the greater whole from which the faithful attains superior life and being. Not only in such a polity is the individual discouraged from expressing personal opinions, interests, and prejudices, but he must get rid of them as 'they obscure the objectively true and good, which, if he is true to his true nature, he is bound to will'.¹⁷⁹ The more completely such idiosyncrasies are rooted out, the more lasting and stable are the new freedom and happiness the individual might benefit from by his being part of the harmonious whole. The intellectual affinity with the French philosopher seems to be further confirmed by the fact that, like Rousseau, Rabbi Kook discredited parliamentary institutions, political parties, universal suffrage, and balance/separation of powers as the 'real enemies' of social cohesion.¹⁸⁰

However, it can be equally argued that Kook's appreciation of what represents a worthy Jewish national renewal is more consistent with his own religious tradition, rather than with selected motifs of continental political philosophy, in which the rabbi was nevertheless remarkably proficient.¹⁸¹ On this ground, Rabbi Kook's dismissal of democratic norms and of the Western state system (the 'large insurance company') might primarily originate from his monotheistic interpretation of the divine: the absolute oneness of God which is not subject to divisions. If sovereignty belongs to God alone, the only form of political authority that can legitimately be put forward is a theocratic rule implementing 'revealed law'. Quite tellingly, the totalistic vision that Rabbi

Kook projects onto the future Israel is mirrored by Sayyid Qutb's political application of 'tawhid': the Islamic principle advocating the absolute and indivisible unity of God.¹⁸² For the forefather of doctrinaire Jihadism, 'any system in which the final decisions are referred to human beings deifies [them] by designating others than God as lords over men, reducing others to the status of slaves [and therefore] to proclaim the sovereignty of God means to eliminate all human kingship'.¹⁸³

Although such pronouncements are often toned down in public rhetoric, Gush Emunim's involvement in politics is intrinsically justified by the ideal of a 'Torahcratic republic' supplanting the current secular order.¹⁸⁴ In keeping with Rabbi Kook's vision, the culmination of the Religious Zionist revival will be reached with the reinstatement of the Great Sanhedrin: ancient Israel's supreme religious authority that brought together seventy-one most distinguished rabbinical sages from every district of Eretz Ysrael.¹⁸⁵ Once restored, this legislative and judicial court would promote the full application of Hebrew law in the re-born theocratic state, and examine whether or not its rulings and customs are in accordance with the Torah. As a source of spiritual enlightenment, the Great Sanhedrin will heal, once and for all, the damages produced by the Zionists, through their 'outright secularization' and 'religious watering-down'.¹⁸⁶ The longing for the re-establishment of a rabbinic synedrin follows a leitmotif in Gush Emunim's collective imagery. Here, a selected and highly idealized version of Israel's Biblical and historical past is recovered as mythical 'meta-narrative' upon which shaping the society of the future.¹⁸⁷ As Gideon Aran observes, the 'nostalgic yearning for a glorious beginning of days' provides the faithful with the emotional thrust to reach out for the harmonious perfection and unity of the end of days:

The ancient model is used by religious-political radicals to map the future with regard to both ritual matters and actual social affairs. Gush Emunim's vision includes not only the restoration of all details of biblical worship in toto but also institution of the Bible as the standard for conduct of public systems normally regulated by the state. Activist-believers in Israel even fantasize about an economic system based on the Pentateuch, observing the sabbatical year and the Jubilee, institutions which functioned two or three millennia ago or even earlier. In this fundamentalist doctrine and others, activist-believers stress that restoration of such institutions fulfils a religious obligation and will automatically cure the nation's moral decadence and solve social problems.¹⁸⁸

The injunction that the Torah and Talmudic regulations should guide the new Jewish polity impinges not only on the civic and political behaviour of its members, but also and foremost on their private lives. Gush Emunim's national-

spiritual renewal entails shunning half tints with a monochromatic rule. Insofar as the scope of halakhic norms and values increases, the pluralism of interests, identities and belongings characterizing secular society is gradually erased. The divine law, in other words, will never leave the individual alone.¹⁸⁹ The Torahcratic order rectifies the contradictions and aporiae flawing the current order by a 'great simplification' of its unsettling complexities. The immediate corollary is that the terms fixing the inclusion in the new holy community turn out to be the same ones determining the exclusion from it. Membership is by default restricted to those who identify with and embrace the absolute truth of the Torah, whereas those who do not are regarded as alien. Several Jewish intellectuals warned about the worrisome resemblances between Religious Zionism's social utopianism and the palingenetic longings animating last century's totalitarian ideologies and regimes. Yeshayahu Leibowitz charged that assigning the state an intrinsically sacred import represents the quintessential feature of any Fascist programme of national regeneration: 'if this is true in general, it is all the more true when the values the Torah and Mitzvoth are attached to it'.¹⁹⁰ Coming to terms with the remarkable appeal that modern Jewish religious nationalism was able to exert after the Six Day War, the historian Uriel Tal recognized in its rhetoric

a dogmatic school of thought and methodical doctrine, which inevitably leads to a policy that cannot tolerate the concept of human and civil rights, because the conception of the totality of the dimensions of time and place leaves no room for tolerance. Religious Zionism is a movement which possesses great inner powers of mystical belief, and in light of the analysis of its ideological foundations, we find ourselves confronted with a structure familiar to us from twentieth-century political Messianism. There is as yet no place for comparison of content, but with regard to the structure of the conception - as distinct from its content - it is impossible not to notice an analogy to totalitarian movements of this century.¹⁹¹

Since the early seventies onwards, confident activist-believers pursued the Religious Zionist ideal of national rebirth in their present. Through various strategies they attempted to convert secular Jewish Israelis to Judaism, fostering their return (in Hebrew 'teshuva') to the bosom of Orthodoxy. In this regard Gush Emunim is far from being an inward-looking sect that scrupulously guards its own religious identity by retreating within its boundaries (as many Haredi identities do today in Israel). From its inception, Gush Emunim rather directed its message 'outside the circle of those who had already committed', in a revolutionary attempt to render its own idea of salvation compulsory for the rest of the Israeli society.¹⁹²

5.12 Between June 1967 and October 1973

One of the most daunting tasks concerning Gush Emunim is investigating its origins. A gap of several years stands between Kookism's inception and crystallization as a theological doctrine and the birth of Gush Emunim as political movement.¹⁹³ Among historians it is generally assumed that the revolutionary potentials inscribed into Rabbi Kook's Mystical-Cabalistic system could not be actualized until the Six-Day War, and without the state of collective euphoria that ensued the event. The eruption of Gush Emunim and its Messianic theo-politics, observes Gershom Gorenberg, was compelled by a set of socio-psychological factors reacting to the mythical forces that the 'war of redemption' unleashed within Israeli society:

The Six Day War did more than create a new political and military map in the Middle East. It also changed the mythic map, in a piece of the world where myths have always bent reality. For Israelis, even those furthest from faith, it was easy to regard the victory as a kind of redemption. Jews, inscribed in history as victims, were now victors. The homeland, partitioned in 1948, was all in Israeli hands. For some Israelis, especially Zionists, the exultation coalesced into religious and political doctrine. The conquest of 'our Hebron' and 'our Shechem', the Old City and the Temple Mount, showed that God was leading His people to final redemption. As never before, Messianism became a respected ideology, powering the movement that settled Jews across the West Bank.¹⁹⁴

That a historical occurrence was turned into a prophetic validation was somehow confirmed by the symbolic-creationist meaning which was promptly attached to the June 1967 war: 'just as the entire cosmos was created in six days, so was the Land of the Fathers emancipated in six days'.¹⁹⁵ As sudden divine illumination, the event marked a shift in paradigm in the relationship between Orthodox Jewry and secular Zionism. If, from beginning of the 20th century, the rising success of the Zionist ideology filled the void generated by a waning degree of religiosity within Jewish communities, after June 1967 the decline and stagnation of political Zionism made room for a revitalized form of Orthodoxy. As a consequence of a territorial gain resembling a prophetic fulfilment, the 1967 war precipitated, in both the Israeli and Diaspora contexts, a phenomenon known to the historian as 'Judaization': the assimilation of the notion of being Jewish to that of Biblical Judaism.¹⁹⁶ Acting like a potent catalyst, the war of redemption forced many secular and religious Jews alike to rediscover a 'unity of fate' based on their shared Hebrew inheritance, but it did so by syncretizing that revived ancestral tradition with the modern myths and values of Israeli nationalism, statehood, maximalist territorial irredentism, and military might.¹⁹⁷

Rather than focusing exclusively on the epiphanic import of a single historical event such as the Six-Day War, other experts on the subject locate the real generative circumstances of Gush Emunim in the stark contrast between the triumphant climate of June 1967 and the collective shock of October 1973.¹⁹⁸ From such a perspective, the political activation of the Religious Zionist creed would be contingent upon the abrupt transition from the collective Messianic awakening aroused by the mystical re-encounter with Land of the Fathers to the traumatic disconfirmation which originated from Yom Kippur War, when the hope of imminent redemption was blighted, first, by the military debacle and, later, by the plan of strategic disengagement from the Sinai Peninsula. If the miraculous victory of June 1967 reinvigorated the Messianic fervour of Religious Zionist activist-believers, the downfall of October 1973 gave impetus to the idea that direct intervention was urgently needed in order to restore the redemptive process back on its previous course.¹⁹⁹ In its formative-charismatic phase (1974-77), Gush Emunim came to the fore of Israeli public life as an uncompromising revolutionary vanguard drawing mainly, but not exclusively, from students of the Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva, the ideological hotbed of Kookism.²⁰⁰ As a close-knit paligenetic community oriented towards a new beginning, Gush Emunim's embryonic nucleus assembled around some key charismatic figures of the Religious Zionist front, such as Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, Hanan Porat and Rabbi Moshe Levinger. These charismatic leaders were able to mobilize spirit and deeds of their first acolytes by projecting the image of what did not yet exist: the utopian theocratic rule over all Eretz Yisrael which was meant to supplant the deficiencies of the secular order. Disdaining parliamentary representation along with other conventional channels, the 'knitted skullcaps' generation broadcast its message and built its initial consensus through extra- and anti-institutional means - namely, by mounting a series of mass demonstrations against any Israeli territorial concession to Egypt, while simultaneously settling in the occupied Judea, Samaria, and Golan Heights.²⁰¹

The motives at the basis of Gush Emunim's initial success in terms of popular consensus mirror to some extent those spurring its transition from quietism to militancy. If the remarkable success of June 1967 emboldened the national ego with a 'narcissistic over-evaluation, a tendency to believe in one's own omnipotence vis-à-vis neighbours and enemies', in October 1973, after just three days of battle, 'that inflated balloon of grandiosity and invincibility was painfully punctured', pushing many Israelis towards the opposite extreme of

‘vulnerability, helplessness, and humiliation’. What used to be taken for granted, maintains Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, suddenly turned into something ‘ephemeral and shaky’.²⁰² Hitherto advocated only by a handful of fringe groups, the vision of imminent Messianic re-birth gained momentum as a new panacea providing a demoralized majority with hope and vitality. It is worth stressing that the dream of national-religious palingenesis could not have established a significant resonance within various strata of the Israeli society without a vacuum of governmental authority and legitimacy. Befalling the country like a shattering earthquake, the Yom Kippur War induced ‘a loss of credibility in Israel’s most trusted institutions, such as political leadership and the military, and an erosion of faith in the ability of the nation to achieve its aspirations’.²⁰³ Casting its role as the protector of the country’s ‘refusal to compromise itself’,²⁰⁴ Gush Emunim was able to exploit the breakdown within the secular structures of power and meaning, and capitalize on it to advance the cause of Eretz Ysrael to a wider audience.

5.13 Gush Emunim as a revitalization movement

In April 1974, Gush Emunim was officially established as an ideological faction of the National Religious Party. As already noted, its theo-political programme enmeshed immediate objectives with long terms ambitions, positing the achievement of both as strictly interdependent. On the one hand, the movement was to settle throughout the occupied territories and press for governmental decisions in favour of their ultimate annexation to Israel; on the other, it aimed at regenerating both the secular state and society from their spiritual bankruptcy and ultra-Orthodoxy from its political apathy by means of an all-encompassing national-religious renaissance.²⁰⁵ Such a twofold agenda was enshrined in the only comprehensive manifesto the movement ever produced:

[Our aim is] to bring about a great awakening of the Jewish People towards full implementation of the Zionist vision, with the recognition that this vision originates in Jewish tradition and roots, and that its objective is the full redemption of Israel and of the entire world. The Jewish People is now engaged in fierce struggle for survival in its Land and for its right to full sovereignty therein. Yet we are witnessing a process of decline and retreat from realization of the Zionist ideal, in word and deed. Four related factors are responsible for this crisis: mental weariness and frustration induced by the extended conflict, the lack of challenge, preference for selfish goals over national objectives, and the attenuation of Jewish faith.²⁰⁶

Gush Emunim's emphasis on the wholesale renewal of both Judaism and secular Zionism led political scientist Myron Aronoff to address the phenomenon through the conceptual category of 'revitalization movement', as firstly introduced by anthropologist Antony Wallace.²⁰⁷ In a pioneering essay published in 1956, Wallace defined the process of revitalization as 'a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture'.²⁰⁸ According to Wallace, the period of revitalization typically follows a moment of 'cultural distortion', in which the received frameworks of authority and meaning are put under severe strain. This crisis can occur as a consequence of 'natural calamities or may be due to the eruption of internecine socio-economic and political tensions, or to occupation, colonization, or acts of aggression inflicted on it by other society'.²⁰⁹ As a result of one or a combination of these factors, the *nomos* regulating the normal maintenance and reproduction of societal life becomes 'internally flawed': its constitutive elements are no longer 'harmoniously related', but 'mutually inconsistent and interfering'. If not promptly countervailed, this deterioration might lead to the 'symbolic death' of the collective order of existence. When the anomic crisis is 'sufficiently profound to prevent the [society] from perpetuating and regenerating itself through its own symbolic and ritual resources'²¹⁰, the ground is prepared for the emergence of a revitalization movement, or in Griffin's terms for a palingenetic community oriented towards a new beginning.

In its embryonic stage, the community takes form and acts in guise of counter-society. Its adherents realize that they must either face extinction or initiate a process of revitalization. In order to do so, they secede, both symbolically and physically, from the larger human association in which they feel alienated, seeking the utmost degree of meaning and purpose within that unified and cohesive 'identity group' in which all members are, feel, or desire in unison. In the initial phase of the process, the host of alternative values and goals embodied by the community must be nurtured in a protected milieu. This safe haven remains insulated from outer-reality and from the contending versions of truth confusingly circulating in it. The withdrawal within, however, is only a temporary tactic for preparing the assault against what is dreaded outside. If the close-knit community functions as a 'giant cauldron' mustering grievances, frustration and anxieties of the affiliated, the primary aim is to render those grievances, frustration and anxieties into a concerted and unyielding exertion of utter change.²¹¹ As a revolutionary elite, the community is entrenched in the sense of having being singled out to carry out a vital task.

Its members always act in good faith and for the sake of the larger society. They cultivate their readiness to deviate from or contravene the prevailing rules only because they believe themselves to possess the right formula to remedy the crisis engulfing the whole polity. It is worth stressing that, despite its antinomian charge, the plan of radical re-structuring is never devised for a purely annihilative purpose. The status quo is challenged, but always in order to creatively take charge over its failing symbolic system with a new and more efficacious *nomos*. In this sense, every revitalization movement should be primarily seen as an adaptive instrument for socio-cultural renewal.²¹² Another important feature of several revitalization phenomena, maintains Wallace, is the 'prophet': a charismatic figure who can channel the revolutionary élan of his or her followers by aligning their thoughts, aspiration and deeds with the normative vision of the community. Such a figure convincingly accounts for the current plight, as well as furnishing hope for future fulfilment. On the one hand, the prophet explains the social malaise embattling the community as resulting from the repeated vituperation of certain dogmas and norms of conduct; on the other, he or she promises individual or collective revitalization from impending catastrophe provided that 'the right injunctions are followed and the right rituals are practiced'.²¹³

Notwithstanding the revolutionary claims, observes Wallace, the palingenesis these movements avow rarely constitutes an *ex novo* creation. The term 'revitalization' itself derives from the idea that, according to those involved in the process, restoring values, customs, or tropes belonging to an idealized version of the past can rejuvenate the deplorably corrupt status quo.²¹⁴ However, at a closer analysis, this revival is not a mere re-institution of the past either. Firstly, one should consider that recovering what is thought to have been the 'tradition' is not an unproblematic task to accomplish, 'for the image of the ancient culture to be revived is distorted by historical ignorance'. Secondly, even if this 'philological restoration' was feasible, the process of revitalization would never be able to make *tabula rasa* of the mainstream *nomos* that the movement challenges, leaving many of its aspects 'intact, if unrecognized, in large areas of experience'.²¹⁵ Wallace also notes that, more often than not, the revitalization movement nurtures a significant degree of identification, envy, or Girardian 'mimetic desire' towards the cultural lore it loathes and rejects as aggressively alien.²¹⁶ Taking into account all these factors, the absolute novelty every revitalizing project professes would rather be an intense syncretism recombining, in an original and unprecedented symbolic tapestry,

heterogeneous and even incompatible elements, selected from a vast repertoire. This includes elements of the idealized-utopian past, but also constitutive features of the same societal order considered as flawed and deficient. Wallace names this procedure as 'mazeway resynthesis' to allude to the evidence that the salvific path out of the 'labyrinthine anomie' is cut by means of the revitalization movement's syncretic and selective re-aggregation of different symbolic apparatuses. The new *Weltanschauung* put forward as a solution to the sense-making crisis would always entail a cultural compromise drawing from both the 'healthy sources' of the tradition and those values, myths, symbols and subsystems that have already attained currency within the society.²¹⁷ In light of its distinctive synthesis recombining elements of Modernity, Zionist nationalism, Jewish Biblical tradition and Rabbinic ultra-Orthodoxy, Gush Emunim perfectly fits this description.

5.14 A Jewish 'McJihad'

Fifteen years ago, American political theorist Benjamin Barber addressed the rising impact of globalization through his heuristic model based on two diametrically opposed yet intertwined dynamics: the global-centrifugal drive of 'McWorld' versus the local-centripetal pull of 'Jihad'.²¹⁸ With its intensification of planetary human interconnectedness, flows of trade, finance, information, migration and ideas, but also with its coextensive erosion of traditional frameworks of meaning and authority, globalization is often recognized as the furthest exertion of 'disembedding' Modernity.²¹⁹ The same phenomenon would nonetheless produce a bifurcated outcome. On the one hand, the hyper-capitalist and consumerist McWorld increasingly melts down the socio-economic barriers between nation states, rendering the world's complexities into a blandly indistinct market. But, on the other, the drive towards global homogeneity also assists the mounting tide of ethno-religious hatreds and rivalries, which are today responsible for the fragmentation of the geopolitical landscape into smaller tribal units. For Barber, the dialectics between the two polarities define the axial tension of our epoch. As they modernize under the influx of globalization, world societies become simultaneously and indistinguishably more universalistic and more particularistic, more 'neo-liberalist' and more 'neo-Fundamentalist'.²²⁰ Israeli sociologist Uri Ram charges that at present the Jewish state is caught 'betwixt and between' the strains generated by Barber's dialectic field, both on a regional and domestic scale:

Israel is straddled geopolitically between McWorld and Jihad, between being a protégé of the United States and being situated in the Middle East, at the heart of world Islamic resistance to the American creed. (...) Yet not only is Israel situated globally between McWorld and Jihad but also undergoes 'within' the same bifurcation that takes place in the world at large. (...) On the one hand Israel is a stable parliamentary democracy, it is highly advanced economically, and a Western-style consumer society; on the other it is a state of occupation, apartheid and social deprivation, and a place in which a separation between church (i.e. synagogue) and state hardly obtains.²²¹

In the last two decades or so, argues Ram, the extensive and intense impact of highly globalized Modernity bolstered an already ongoing decline within the classic paradigm of Zionist nationalism – a decline that, as previously noted, began at the very least since the early 1970s. Today, as the nation stands in a fully post-Zionist and globalized era, the central fault line along which Israeli collective identity is shaped would be the struggle between the all-pervasive 'McWorld' and the backlash of Jewish 'Jihad'. Further, Barber's 'bifurcation model' finds a clear geographic expression in two main Israeli urban realities, only a forty-five-minute drive away from each other: the secularized and affluent Tel Aviv; and Orthodox and comparatively destitute Jerusalem. The former stands as a vivid example of a modern and dynamic city, distinguished by a capitalistic urge, all sorts of 'information highways, and the fascination for the global village, in which there is room for [the pop singer] Madonna and McDonald's'.²²² 'Jerusalemite Israeliness', in contrast, yearns for a wholesale return into the bosom of Orthodox Judaism – a desire for religious revival which borders on ethnic-religious exclusivity, and is often dovetailed with fear from, distrust in, or contempt for the non-Jewish 'other'.²²³

According to many commentators, the tension between liberal-pluralistic values and ethno-religious tribalism would be already manifested, although to a milder extent, in the 'schizophrenic' essence of Israel's Declaration of Independence. On the one hand the 1948 document keeps faith with the classic paradigm of Western democracies by promising equal rights to all residents of the state, national and racial origins notwithstanding. On the other it places exceptional accent on the Jewish character of the Israeli state. The two principles would stand in a negative relation: should the state decide to nurture the universalistic side of its 'divided self', 'in the long run it is bound to lose its Jewish essence. Since the Arabs have the demographic factor working for them, the loss of the Jewish majority is just a matter of time';²²⁴ conversely, should it opt to safeguard its exclusivist ethnic-religious salience, the Israeli state would be obliged to compromise on its democratic inclusiveness.²²⁵

Reminiscent of the Hellenizing influxes vexing Jewish culture in the wake of the Maccabean revolt, the bifurcated impact of globalized Modernity on Israeli society would overlap with and embolden pre-existing class, ethnic and political cleavages. On the one hand, the 'winners' of globalization - that is, the Ashkenazi upper and middle classes - would be more inclined to buy into cosmopolitan attitudes, fully endorsing the Jewish state's integration into the Westernized patterns of McWorld. Nevertheless, opting for an Israeli assimilation into the global 'Fukuyama trend' entails an almost unavoidable stand in domestic politics: relinquishing the ideal of *Eretz Ysrael* in favour of a negotiated peace with the Arab counterparts. Neo-liberalist capitalism is to supersede national-religious chauvinism because the maximalist agenda of colonization in the occupied territories engenders violent resistance and regional conflict and, therefore, deters economic growth along with international trade and investment. According to Ram, the Oslo agreements pushed forward by the Rabin-Peres government in the mid 1990s were the first McWorld diplomatic manifesto sacrificing Gush Emunim's holy cause in order to prepare the ground for 'free market' prosperity. On the other hand, the process of global 'marketisation' begets and facilitates a concurrent process of tribalisation, namely in the guise of Jewish Jihadism. The losers of globalization - that is, lower labouring classes and newly immigrated citizens coming from East Europe - respond to the McWorld's promiscuity and decadence of values on a more local and particularistic scale. They adhere to a reactionary, sectarian and confrontational form of ethno-nationalism, and reject the upper classes' cosmopolitan aspiration by stressing that the Jewish people must 'dwell alone', in stark contrast with the Gentiles. Prominent spiritual leaders of this front maintain that accepting any diplomatic bargain over Eretz Ysrael equals to the surrender of the true Jewish soul and inheritance to 'the dying Western culture', and therefore make the Chosen 'drown in a sea of lusts, licentiousness and permissiveness, confusion and misguided beliefs that would lead them astray from the right path'.²²⁶ It is quite revealing that, akin to their Islamist counterparts, the Jewish Jihad's acolytes fully subscribe to Huntington's argument positing an insurmountable 'clash of civilizations' between their coreligionaries and the surrounding world. Ideologically mobilized by the right-wing political elites (both secular and national-religious²²⁷), Jewish Jihadism is the social base providing mass consensus to the most irredentist policies in the West Bank, and also speaking the idiom of war at all costs against the Arab enemies.

It is worth stressing that, in keeping with Barber's analytical schemes, McWorldist consumerism is the 'prime mover' that activates and fuels its derivative 'twin' Jihadist Fundamentalism. The former, in turn, casts its mission in light of the need to reform the world from the obscurantism of the latter. Otherwise put, the two forces, being two different expressions of the same process of globalization, would not stand against each other in stark Manichean terms, but rather in a dialectic complementation, leading sometimes towards a creative synthesis between opposites:

Progress moves in steps but sometimes lurched backwards in history's twisting maze. Jihad not only revolts against but also abets McWorld, while McWorld not only imperils but also recreates and reinforces Jihad. Furthermore, McWorld and Jihad are not the tags of distinct social groups or world regions but rather dimensions of globalization that are intermixed, so that at certain points they almost collapse into what was termed 'McJihad'.²²⁸

Gush Emunim is apparently the most vociferous ethno-tribalist exponent of the Jihadist paradigm. With its obsessive emphasis on biblical memory, community with God, Messianic renaissance in *Eretz Ysrael*, national-religious solidarity and self-sacrifice, the settlers' movement no doubt swims against the prevailing currents of McWorld. Recovering what is authentically 'local' and idiosyncratically 'Jewish', and recombining it with a chauvinist rendition of Zionist nationalism and politics, is presented in guise of remedy to the societal ills, frustrations and malaises stemming from the homogenizing forces of rapid and indiscriminate globalization, neo-liberalization, and privatization.²²⁹ However, in keeping with Barber's bifurcated model, Gush Emunim's syncretic revivalism attains remarkable vitality by drinking directly from the springs of the avowedly despised McWorld. Standing against the encroachment of Western Modernity, observes Fiege, often implies embracing 'selectively' some of its most defining aspects:

To survive and thrive in a modern world, believers need to adopt aspects of Modernity selectively. They use modern media, often use advanced weapons, and, where such a regime exists, join in the open atmosphere of democracy and free press. Modern technology and institutions are usually accompanied by Modernist culture that infiltrates the believers' ranks. The Fundamentalists therefore are always balancing strict religious dicta with the lures of modern life. That is true even among groups that succeed in constructing a secluded enclave, such as the Jewish ultra-Orthodox, and is inevitable in communities that cherish their good relations with secular co-nationals, such as the ideological settlers of Gush Emunim.²³⁰

Once interpreted as a Modernist anti-modernization movement, Gush Emunim would completely embody the 'McJihad paradox'. Its political

mobilization is apparently motivated by the mounting assault of an updated form of Hellenization, as epitomized by the soulless McWorld values and codes. However, it would be misleading to interpret Gush Emunim as a mere rejection of, or, let alone, a retreat from the maelstrom of Modernity. As a revitalizing project, Gush Emunim de-constructs the alien cultural tropes, but only to re-aggregate and syncretise them with the healthy elements of the Jewish and Zionist tradition. The end result of such a process would be an unprecedented Modernist cultural compound. This new *sui generis* reality originating from heterogeneous and apparently incompatible constituents – in Wallace’s terminology, ‘mazeway resynthesis’ – would cut a revolutionary path towards a restoration of order, that is, a new *nomos* out of the anomic crisis engulfing the Israeli polity as a whole. Applying John Gray’s assumptions about the true ‘meaning’ of Al-Qaeda to the Jewish context, Gush Emunim might be characterized not primarily as an atavistic reaction to the Westoxication of Israeli society, but as a ‘sacralised form of Modernity masqueraded as a true religion’.²³¹ Put differently, Gush Emunim’s palingenetic project would represent a symptom of the very disease of which the movement for a national-religious renewal presents itself as a cure.²³²

5.15 Normalization

Revitalization movements reject the current social order in which they reside and invest their hopes and resources in a new age whose arrival they perceive as imminent. The result is a collective existence located between the old order, whose demise is presumed inevitable, and the future one, which has yet to be born.²³³ It is essential to note that, as a group-constructed line of thought and action, a revivalist phenomenon does not create ‘structural liminality’ (the experiential state of being in transition between ages and orders), but it rather exploits the ambiguous state of ‘betwixt-and-between’, by pro-actively intervening in the vacuum of authority, legitimacy and meaning with a viable alternative to the failing socio-political system.²³⁴ Preserving a revitalizing community in such a liminal position is however no easy task to accomplish. In the first instance, as an exceptional historical circumstance favorable to a charismatic breakthrough, structural liminality is ephemeral in nature, and therefore tends to be soon ‘re-adsorbed’ into normalcy. Secondly, as far as the palingenetic counter-society is concerned, an intensive and costly effort of mobilization is required in order to keep the internal state of effervescence

alive. Further, the pledged assertions of impending and wholesale transformation defining the revitalizing identity can be hardly maintained *ad infinitum*, especially in the wake of disconfirmations and counterevidence (in particular, when the promised transfiguration fails to materialize). Since their *raison d'être* is highly contingent upon the extraordinary circumstances that existed at that particular time and place in which they originated, charismatic movements, secular and religious alike, might be categorized as 'situational'. As long as they detach 'temporally' from the 'state of exception' that has precipitated their formation, situational movements are inherently prone to dissipate their initial thrust unless some sort of institutionalization is comprehensively undertaken. Intra-historical duration cannot be achieved without a substantial process of normalization, which usually entails downgrading or at least redefining the movement's original revolutionary essence and programmatic statements.²³⁵

If Gush Emunim acted upon the national crisis generated by the Yom Kippur War, that situation did not last long. The death of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the prophet of the national-religious renaissance, intensified the process of routinisation, which was already under way after the extraordinary circumstances of 1973. As the charismatic appeal over the Israeli masses was waning and organizational concerns were becoming more pressing, the settlers' movement needed additional forces, which could only be supplied by the same secular institutions that Gush Emunim aimed at supplanting with a Torahcratic republic. Further, the revolutionary *élan* and extra-parliamentary proclivities were to a significant extent de-potentiated when, in order to obtain stable access to the policy-making process and, in so doing, affect social change, Gush Emunim affiliated with the National Religious Party.²³⁶ Lobbying the political establishment through the NRP Knesset members signalled that the anti-institutional movement *par excellence* was growing out of its charismatic phase, whilst reconsidering its revolutionary assertiveness.²³⁷ Paradoxically, observes Aran, Gush Emunim's affirmation as a legitimate player within Israeli mainstream politics marked the beginning of its decline as a revitalization project. As a result of its cooptation, the national-religious front compromised its aura of Messianic counter-culture, putting its religious leadership in uncharted waters or, even worse, in a 'trap':

Despite its obvious advantages, Gush Emunim's institutionalization as an integral part of the Israeli political system was at best a mixed blessing. The movement felt somewhat superfluous: its work was being accomplished by the

government, which established settlements in the occupied territories, set up electricity lines, paved roads, and encouraged people to settle there *en masse*. Yet the government also continued to uphold its commitment to law and order, democracy, and the peace process, which now appeared to threaten Israeli sovereignty in Eretz Ysrael. The ostensible contradiction in the government's behaviour was paralleled by a curious irony within Gush Emunim: as settlements proliferated and expanded at an unprecedented pace, the movement seemed to be deteriorating, lurching from one crisis to another.²³⁸

As repeatedly noted, in order to realize the full transition of Judea and Samaria into the collective perception of the homeland's geography (in Lustick's terms, to reach the 'ideological-hegemonic' status) and, in so doing, render any plan of territorial disengagement beyond the scope of common sense, it was deemed necessary to undertake a conjoined pedagogical and colonialist effort: to engage in informational and outreach activities among the general public, alongside establishing facts on the ground beyond the Green Line. It was only logical to expect that, once the Zionist state's apparatus, resources and institutions had been appointed as the primary medium to accomplish these political objectives, a phase of adaptation and routinisation would have naturally followed.

However, despite the relevance of these arguments, it should not be forgotten that, from a theological angle, the institutionalization of Gush Emunim's theocratic revolution was a potential already sown in the Messianic approach propelling the movement into militancy. Especially when one takes into account their practical and tangible dimension, the twin strategies 'settling in the heart/settling in the land' are entirely consistent with Rabbi Kook's Naturalistic Messianism - a soteriological view according to which Jewish final deliverance is to be pursued progressively, and relying on the assistance stemming from the secular side of the national-religious syncretism. The Messianic Eschaton, understood as a natural process which has begun and whose development each generation of Jews must contribute to, defines precise intra-historical tasks. Otherwise put, the routinisation of the Religious Zionist palingenesis is to a not negligible degree implicit in the emphasis Rabbi Kook put on the mundane and human-led process in respect to the role of transcendental intervention. Ravintzky categorizes Kookism as a 'Messianism without the Messiah': a form of redemption that takes place in the absence of a God-sent redeemer. It is not the Messiah who will miraculously bring about the critical turn (the Messianic age) as theorized within the Apocalyptic schemes of Haredi Judaism, but, on the contrary, it is the earthly trajectory set in motion by secular Zionism and later advanced by the Jewish committed to the cause of

Eretz Ysrael that will give birth to the Messiah. Israel's saviour will neither start nor push salvation forward, only mark its culmination: 'He is not responsible for the planting and growth of the fruit, but rather for its ripening'.²³⁹ Once Gush Emunim adopted Kook's gradualist reading of redemption as a blueprint for political action, the Messianic revolution was 'immanentized' to the extent to which the intra-historical and secular means of accomplishment (the Zionist state and its institutions) overshadowed the transcendental end that revolution was supposed to bring about. The utopian ideal of supplanting the current secular order with a Torah-based theocracy was indefinitely postponed as the transition towards it turned out to matter more than the absolute and meta-historical goal.

According to the Political Science's conventional paradigms, the normalization phase that many charismatic movements undergo often engenders secessionist crises. An in-group ideological split might occur between the dogmatic 'radicals' and the pragmatic 'consensus builders'. The former, having normally led the preliminary stage of extra- or anti-institutional mobilization and protest, remain uncompromisingly faithful to the movement's original values and aims, whereas the latter are more willing to sacrifice those values and aims, or at least negotiating them, in name of 'practical strategies out of idealistic premises'.²⁴⁰ In the Gush Emunim's case, this bifurcation became dangerously evident in the early 1980s, when the integrity of Eretz Ysrael was put under serious political-diplomatic scrutiny.

5.16 Yamit

As mentioned, Religious Zionism's theology enmeshes Judaism with nationalism by sanctifying two key doctrinal principles: the holiness of the Land of Israel is mirrored by and harmonized with the holiness of the State of Israel. On the one hand, Kookism posits Eretz Ysrael as an organic and indivisible entity, given to the Jewish people in everlasting possession in light of the unconditional Covenant God stipulated with them. Hence, no individual or group may relinquish any of its parts without contravening the divine will and reversing the process of Messianic redemption. On the other, we argued that Kookism stems from that segment of Orthodoxy granting a religious value to the Zionist movement and advocating participation in its institutions. Despite the secular gloss, the Israeli state and everything belonging to it is

essentially sacred as, in guise of God's mundane tool, it presses Jewish salvation forward, albeit unknowingly.

Israel's decision to implement the Camp David Accords pitted for the very first time these two principles one against the other. In April 1982, Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Secretary of Defence Ariel Sharon – until then two of the most dedicated secular supporters of the national-religious project – succumbed to the international pressure and agreed to the evacuation and destruction of the settlement region of Yamit in the Sinai Peninsula.²⁴¹ That an Israeli government was willing to relinquish territories as part of a peace agreement with the Arab enemies forced many Religious Zionists to come to terms with the traumatic disconfirmation of their basic assumptions regarding the state's sacred nature and redemptive role. With Yamit historical evidence was going against the grain of the Messianic triumphalism promoted within Kookist circles. This set a dangerous precedent for what could have happened in Judea and Samaria:

The State of Israel [was] moving in a direction that was inconsonant with, and even diametrically opposed to, the process of redemption as Religious Zionists saw it. The withdrawal from Yamit constituted irrefutable proof that the process of redemption was reversible and this was the underlying cause of the dissonance they experienced. (...) The idea that Zionists, unaware of the tremendous mission they bore, would deliver their secular enterprise into the hands of a Messianic theocracy with full control over Eretz Ysrael proved mistaken. The divine mission was neglected by precisely those who were destined to be its bearers, and in place of progress came regression. The desire for 'normality' led the course of redemption to the edge of oblivion.²⁴²

The shattering of the grand vision of redemption at the hands of those who were supposed to be its first promoters sparked a far-reaching theological crisis within the national-religious circles which required an explanation. Many spiritual leaders addressed the 'political shame' of Yamit as rooted in the reliance on diplomatic considerations over internal Jewish ideals and modes. By sacrificing sacred land and uprooting settlements in the name of an Israeli normalization within the accepted patterns of behaviour defining the international community and the Gentiles, the secular state was selling out Israel's distinctiveness and uniqueness as a nation that must necessarily dwell alone in light of its leading role in the process of cosmic restoration. Nonetheless, Yamit did not divert Gush Emunim from the normative path of Kookism. It rather reinforced its resoluteness in pursuing its Messianic mission according to the already consolidated modalities. In the first instance, the moral imperative to conquer and settle the Land by relying on the 'instrumentalities'

of the Zionist state was reaffirmed even more strongly. Secondly, if the primary reason underlying the Sinai withdrawal was the lack of proper understanding about Eretz Ysrael's critical role in the economy of Jewish renewal, the primary task for Gush Emunim remained that of influencing, convincing, and re-educating the entire nation through a long-term 'Kulturkampf'. Inculcating a Messianic consciousness to all Israelis would have kept the abominable elements of Westoxication from infiltrating the Jewish soul and, thus, prevented a general disposition towards further territorial losses.²⁴³ In the wake of Yamit, observes Janet Aviad, Gush Emunim's leaders

found it necessary to state repeatedly that the movement must not break out of the established democratic norms and must not attempt to force the majority to capitulate under threats of civil war or sectarianism. Gush Emunim saw itself as charged to remain within the main body of Israel in order to transform the whole. The movement must not only continue to settle and thereby guarantee the inner and outer continuation of the revitalization and redemption processes. It must also take upon itself the ideological task of defining meaning and guiding the lost people.²⁴⁴

Mainstream Gush Emunim's cadres and members integrated the traumatic evacuation of Sinai into their understanding of history, without undermining Rabbi Kook's gradualist pragmatism. If the consensus builders did not question their allegiance to the secular institutions and, along with it, the assumption that the Zionist state was the sacred medium whereby redemption would have incrementally materialized, a very different response came from the radical fringes of the movement.

5.17 The Apocalyptic turn

Yehuda Etzion, the main ideologue of the Jewish Underground's terroristic plot, is recognized as one of the most original thinkers within contemporary Religions Zionism. Although his Apocalyptic theory of redemption starkly diverts from the official vision of Mercaz Harav Yeshiva (the fountain head of Rabbi Kook's theology), Etzion remains nonetheless an offspring of Gush Emunim milieu and spirit.²⁴⁵ His 'theocratic post-Zionist' perspective is the outcome of a criticism moved on both sides of the national-religious synthesis: the signing of the Camp David Accords with Egypt in 1979 and the decision to sacrifice portions of Eretz Ysrael as 'bargaining chips' on the diplomatic table in 1982 proved to Etzion that secular and Religious Zionism had equally reached a dead end. If secular politicians derailed the course of redemption by sacrificing the holy integrity of the Land they were meant to safeguard and promote, the

lack of determination of Gush Emunim's leadership no doubt allowed this to happen. The polemical thrust, however, was mainly directed against the national-religious doctrinal edifice: to be precise, Rabbi Kook's naturalistic approach to Messianism and the Religious Zionist subservience to the Israeli government ensuing from that approach. Etzion shared with mainstream Gush Emunim the maximalist end to establish a Jewish theocratic kingdom centred on the Temple mount, and with full dominion over present-day Israel, the Sinai, Jordan, Syria, and parts of Lebanon and Iraq.²⁴⁶ What he fiercely contested were the tactics and timetable Kook set and Gush Emunim deployed in order to accomplish that supreme goal. Etzion reached the conclusion that the setback of Yamit was the direct outcome of fixing the redemptive task exclusively upon the gradualist efforts of settling in the Land and in the Israelis' hearts. Further, the sanctification of the state, on the one hand, and the normalization of Gush Emunim within its structure, on the other, blunted the edge of the national-religious revolution, and, in that manner, thwarted any autonomous will to oppose governmental policies envisaging territorial compromise.²⁴⁷ Given all these shortcomings, Etzion felt the urge to supplant old tactics of Messianic realization with new and more effective ones. After historical events disproved the pragmatists' belief that the Messianic Age could be pursued incrementally relying on the Zionist state's institutional channels, forcing the End by an act of redemptive violence became a viable option for the dogmatists.

Once brought to the fore by the Israeli secret services in April 1984, the Jewish Underground's plot shocked both national and international public opinion, and at the same time revealed the present dangers arising from Messianic frenzy. That many of its leaders and activists were closely associated with the Knesset-represented Gush Emunim jeopardized the latter's public standing, triggering heated theological debates and deliberations within Religious Zionist circles. That revelation also shattered modern Israel's 'non-terroristic self-perception', introducing 'a new dimension of brutality', which forever changed 'the way many Israelis thought of themselves and their fellow citizens'.²⁴⁸ In his sociological analysis, Aran underscores the undeniable cause and effect rapport between the Begin government's decision to withdraw from Sinai and the comprehensive countermeasure the terrorist plot set out to halt that major 'national sin'.²⁴⁹

As mentioned in the previous chapters,²⁵⁰ as far as the Hebrew understanding of the Holy Land is concerned, a set of concentric circles stemming from a meaningful centre delimits an organically connected sacred

space. Given this mystical territorial unity, it stands to reason that, for many devout Religious Zionists, a major Messianic reversal happening at Eretz Ysrael's periphery (Yamit's evacuation) might have repercussions at its epicentre (the Temple Mount).²⁵¹ The Jewish Underground members foresaw that the only move to put redemption back on course was that of blowing up what they termed as the 'abomination': the Dome of Rock and Al Aqsa Mosque. These two shrines represent together the third most important sanctuary in the Muslim world.²⁵² For millions of devout Sunnis, Islam began in Mecca and Medina, but to gloriously climax in Jerusalem, the 'Apocalyptic capital' of their faith. *Haram el-Sharif*, the Arab designation for the Temple Mount, is commonly recognized as the 'Noble Sanctuary' or 'Furthest Mosque'. As recounted in the Koran, at the opening of sura 17, *Haram el-Sharif* is the destination of the Prophet Muhammad's miraculous Night Journey and the place from which He ascended to heaven to be received by God. There, the Islamic Millennium will be inaugurated under the rule of the Mahdi. A sort of 'fateful symmetry' exists between the Muslim and Jewish Messianic expectations, and both emotionally invest on the same thirty-five acre compound.²⁵³ The Temple Mount is the exact location where the Jewish End Time drama is expected to unfold. If the First and Second Temple once stood there, that plateau is also designated for the rebuilding of the third and last 'Holy of Holies' - an act that, along with the reinstitution of animal sacrifices mandated by the Hebrew Bible, crowns the advent of the Davidic Messiah.²⁵⁴

In June 1967, the Jewish people were miraculously reunited after two thousand years with the Old City of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Soon after the armistice, Minister of Defence Moshe Dayan, fully aware of the potentials for military, theological, and political clashes arising from a Jewish monopoly over the site, decided to leave its jurisdiction in the hands of the Muslim *Waqf*. Nevertheless that decision alone could not have subsided the wave of Messianic fervour released by the sudden reacquisition. After heated deliberations fraught with political intrigue, not only did the Orthodox authorities align with Dayan's 'status quo arrangement', but went even further. By October of the same year, they issued an unprecedented rabbinic ruling forbidding Jewish access to 'any part of the Temple Mount, irrespective of the gate used for entrance'. Many Israelis felt deprived of 'the most sacred site in their religious landscape, a site from which Jews had been traumatically barred and to which they had sought and fought to return relentlessly'. The main theological argument offered to back the ruling was that the restriction would

save 'Jewish lives' by reducing the likelihood of interreligious conflict at 'the single most volatile piece of real estate in the Middle East, perhaps on the planet'.²⁵⁵ Governmental and rabbinic efforts also converged in re-channelling the believers' spiritual yearnings towards a surreptitious *axis mundi*, a new bridge between the human and the divine world. The Wailing Wall, the only remnant of the Second Temple left standing after the Roman siege in 70 ce, was soon appointed as an alternative and less disputed foci of Jewish cult and prayer. Given the impressive number of rabbis who put their signature on the ruling, the vast majority of Orthodox Jews (Religious Zionists included) recognized the legitimacy of the ban imposed on them.²⁵⁶ For extremists of the kind of Etzion, on the contrary, the status quo arrangement along with the rabbinic ruling endorsing it seemed frustratingly incomprehensible. The dismay was heightened by the shame that Israel regained control of the Temple Mount after winning a God-driven war against the Arabs but did not dare rule over it. It rather allowed the 'husk of Ishmael' to desecrate and contaminate what they still considered the primary locus of national-religious identity and Messianic hope. In order to prepare the ground for the Third Temple as well as accelerate the prophetic timetable towards total redemption, Etzion and his followers thought it indispensable to translate desires into radical action, and purify the hallow precinct from the Islamic defilement.²⁵⁷

In the Jewish Underground's imagery, the abomination also functioned as a sort of symbolic scapegoat, whose violent purging was essential to the theocratic palingenesis of secular and Westernized Israeli society. Whilst interrogated by the authorities, Menachem Livni, the plot's logistic and operational mind, contended that the existence of the two mosques on the Temple Mount represented 'the basis of the Arabs' hold on the Holy Land', but more importantly 'the root cause of all the spiritual errors of our generation'.²⁵⁸ Concrete action against the abomination was therefore required to tackle once and for all the deficiencies afflicting the nation. The cleansing of the abomination would have played as a 'catalyst for the Jewish ascent up the scales of sanctity', and thus achieved what the meek Zionist state and Kookism had hitherto missed.²⁵⁹ The aspirations of 'Operation Temple Mount' were perfectly in line with Religious Zionism's overall vision: to actualize Israel's distinctive 'laws of destiny' and, by this means, elevate an ordinary state into a holy kingdom of priests capable of leading the entire world towards salvation.²⁶⁰ What drastically changed was the mode of accomplishment. If Gush Emunim had failed to capture the hearts of the people, a shocking

breakthrough might have yielded better results in reducing the distance between the settlers' cause and the wider Israeli audience. As Haggai Segal, another member of the terrorist group, put it, once it became clear that the Messianic goals could not be achieved by evolution, the revolutionary route emerged as a viable option to rekindle the Jewish spiritual awakening.

It is almost impossible not to detect the Apocalyptic flavour imbuing the whole enterprise. From a theological angle, the idea implied in that single but decisive strike against the Muslim shrines was that redemption was no longer expected to precipitate 'little by little', that is, on Rabbi Kook's naturalistic-progressive grounds, but rather 'totally', 'suddenly', and 'catastrophically'. As an act of creative destruction, the scheme was deliberately masterminded to elicit a 'domino effect' escalating towards an Apocalyptic finale. The bombing of the mosques was meant to usher in the War of Gog Magog against the Islamic world: a desirable eventuality in that it would have in turn compelled the Almighty to intervene on the terrorists' side, assist them in defeating the enemy, and in establishing a Jewish theocratic dominion on earth.²⁶¹ In this regard, Aran reported that

a scholarly simulation game conducted at the Harvard Centre for International Affairs analyzed the possible outcomes of [the Jewish Underground's] scheme, had it succeeded. Some experts believed that it might have triggered World War III. The cell of activist-believers had in fact taken such a possibility into account. The head of the Underground foresaw that the bombing of the abomination would arouse Muslims to a global jihad, sweeping all mankind into an ultimate confrontation. (...) Israel's victorious emergence from this longed-for trial by fire would then pave the way for the coming of the Messiah'.²⁶²

Etzion's theocratic post-Zionism should be interpreted as a reaction as well as corrective to the various lacunae stemming from Kookism's application within the Israeli political context. In particular, the Jewish Underground's violent antinomianism culminating in the plan to blow up the mosques arose, on the hand, from the institutionalisation of Gush Emunim's spiritual revolution, and, on the other, from the painful cognitive dissonance between Messianic ideal and historical reality – a dissonance generated by the Zionist state's willingness to betray its sacred mission by trading portions of Eretz Ysrael for peace. On this ground, theocratic post-Zionism might be also seen as a further 'revitalizing upsurge' growing out of or, better, seceding from a more comprehensive but declining revivalist phenomenon (Gush Emunim).

The reading of redemption advocated by the terrorists represents however an original and fairly idiosyncratic concoction of various normative elements

belonging to both the Naturalistic and Apocalyptic modes of Messianic realization, two modes that have been extensively discussed in the first section of this study. If the Jewish Underground's sudden and violent manner of hastening the End breaks with Rabbi Kook's gradual pragmatism, and, to an equal extent, with Religious Zionism's distinctive loyalty towards the secular state and its rules, the transition out of Naturalistic Messianism is consummated without losing the distinctive Promethean edge of Kookism – the key theological tenet that the redemptive process can and must be proactively advanced by human action. Otherwise argued: in light of his inherent catastrophist approach, Etzion moves closer to the Apocalyptic pessimism of the Haredi world, that is, the staunchest form of anti-Zionist Judaism.²⁶³ However, he does so by rejecting the Ultra-Orthodox injunction that the burden of redemption ought to be left to the Lord alone, in a vague and elusive manner. Within theocratic post-Zionism, on the contrary, there is a distinctive call for human action, which, in its radicalism, largely supplants the passive hope in divine intercession. By forcing the End below with one fateful blow, the terrorists intended to activate the higher powers above, 'obliging' the Master of the Universe to intervene on Israel's behalf.²⁶⁴ These arguments would confirm the assumption that the two modes - Naturalistic/progressive and Apocalyptic/catastrophic - are not mutually exclusive, but rather stand in a creative and ever-changing tension. In its various permutations, the Messianic ideal responds like a barometer to external variations taking place in the socio-historical context. Its extreme sensitivity and adaptability towards reality represent the counterpoint to the influence that the Messianic ideal exerts on reality when it constellates as a political force.

Etzion has been frequently labelled a 'zealot'. In Jewish Orthodox lexicon, the term designates an overly pious believer whose fanatical ideas and deeds lie beyond the pale of a theological framework recognized as normative²⁶⁵ – in Etzion's case, Religious Zionism. Although its practical applications were mainly directed against the 'husks of Ishmael', the heathen presence on the Temple Mount, theocratic post-Zionism also entailed a blatant criticism against Gush Emunim's hierocratic leadership. Zealots paradigmatically act upon their own initiative whenever the mainstream religious establishment they belong to is judged too weak to take serious action against what undermines or offends their cherished beliefs. Although it is precisely this avowed weakness to spur their resentful militancy, zealots nevertheless seem incapable of fully bypassing the rabbinic tradition they are rooted in. More often than not, their heterodox

stand yearns for some sort of *a priori* or *a posteriori* authorization by some respected figures within the same orthodox milieu they criticize and challenge.²⁶⁶ As far as the Jewish Underground is concerned, many contend that the more indicative and thought provoking aspects rest on the evidence that the zealous urge to precipitate redemption catastrophically was curbed not by external forces (the intervention of the Shin Bet), but rather by the internal decision to indefinitely procrastinate the plan. That decision by and large depended on the lack of rabbinic patronage or approval. Despite Etzion being highly thought of because of his otherworldly ideals and purity of intents, his programme of active redemption was nevertheless hindered by a substantial 'legitimacy deficit'. In the first instance, neither he nor anybody else in the conspiracy circle had been ordained as a rabbi nor carried any resemblance of halakhic authority. Secondly, all the attempts carried out to secure rabbinic endorsement were met, at best, with concern or, at worst, with disdain and condemnation. Revered Religious Zionist rabbis referred to plots to expedite theocratic elevation 'catastrophically' with the label of Sabateanism – a false and dangerous form of Messianism putting at serious risk Jewish existence.²⁶⁷ Curiously enough, theocratic post-Zionism was stigmatized by the same epithet Haredi Judaism usually deploys to denounce Gush Emunim's political Messianism.

Once Operation Temple Mount was foiled, the focus diverted from the most spectacular but impractical Millenarian vision towards more feasible acts of 'smaller terrorism' against Palestinian officials, schools and population. The Jewish Underground shelved its grand scheme, but without abandoning its underlying principle, according to which chaos and violence against Arabs were harbingers of Jewish redemption in that they could effectively prevent and reverse any peace process. Today, a not too dissimilar tactic known as 'price-tag policy' is systematically implemented by the 'Hilltop Youth', the most radical splinter groups within Religious Zionist panorama over which neither Gush Emunim leadership nor the secular state has control whatsoever.²⁶⁸ Every time the Israeli government enforces evacuation of unauthorised outposts or curbs settlement expansion, these young and ideologically infused settlers exact a 'price' for such a betrayal by attacking Palestinian lives, or vandalizing their religious symbols and properties.²⁶⁹ In their mind, a struggle beyond the accepted confines of legality constitutes an objective in its own right as it is deliberately designed to elicit Arab retaliation. This, in turn, is expected to

escalate into a wider crisis forestalling any direct peace talks between the Israeli and the Palestinian Authorities.

That Etzion's dream to spark an Apocalyptic 'Big Bang' by erasing the Dome of the Rock was overcome by inner theological restraints and inhibitions would implicitly confirm that mainstream Gush Emunim was ultimately capable of withstanding and reabsorbing the crisis generated by Yamit's redemptive drawback. Kookism's standing among its believers, its flexibility and ability to adjust to frustrating realities has been further proved by the containment of the Gaza Strip and Amona pullouts, respectively in July 2005 and February 2006. Notwithstanding the inner spiritual crisis caused by Sharon's betrayal, there were no significant signs of defection amongst the settlers, nor have they resorted into violence against the IDF or the state institutions. However, a unilateral disengagement from the West Bank would no doubt herald an utterly different scenario, that eventuality being the hardest Messianic disconfirmation for Gush Emunim to digest. Not only are the stony hills of Judea and Samaria the location where the settlers have lived for more than thirty years, buildings homes, working and raising their families, but also the most 'non negotiable' locus of Messianic renaissance. Given such vested interests, any Israeli decision to uproot settlements in the West Bank might instantiate a far deeper theological shockwave, and draw, as a counter-reaction, disaffected Religious Zionist audiences towards a catastrophic and anti-legalistic stand, a stand similar to or ever exceeding Etzion's benchmark.²⁷⁰

¹ For an analysis of President Obama's new foreign politics approach towards the Mideast and Islamic world announced in the Cairo Speech (June 2009) see John Zogby, 'Obama Rides The Waves Of Change', *Forbes Magazine*, May 21, 2009, available at: http://www.forbes.com/2009/05/20/obama-middle-east-opinions-columnists-change_print.html; Michael Sherer, 'Obama Seeks to Win Muslim Hearts and Minds', *Time*, June 3, 2009, available at: <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1902334,00.html>; and John Esposito, 'Obama Reversing Christian Right's Damage to Islam', *The Washington Post*, June 6, 2009, available at: http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/john_esposito/2009/06/obama_reversing_christian_rights_damage_to_islam.html.

² Reporting to the Senate armed services committee, General David Petraeus, head of US Central Command, charged that: 'the enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbours present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests. Israeli Palestinian tensions often flare into violence and large-scale armed confrontations. The conflict foments anti-American sentiment, [because of] a perception of US favouritism for Israel. Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of US partnerships with governments and peoples in the region, and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world. Meanwhile, Al-Qaeda and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilise support. The conflict also gives Iran influence in the Arab world through its clients, Lebanese Hezbollah and Hamas'. Quoted in Andrew Sullivan, 'Obama tears up Israel's carte blanche', *Timesonline*, March 28, 2010, available at: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/andrew_sullivan/article7078640.ece

See also Chris McGreal, 'US questions its unwavering support for Israel', *The Guardian*, July 5, 2010, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/05/us-israel-support>. McGreal reports that the Netanyahu government has maintained a 'pattern of conduct' in the occupied territories 'that has pushed the balance toward Israel being more of a liability than an asset' for the US. The Jewish state's tightening grip on East Jerusalem and its indiscriminate settlements policies in the West Bank undermine the security of the American troops in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and endanger the regional peace in the entire Mideast'. Accordingly, US-Israeli diplomatic relations have entered not a crisis, but 'a the state of a tectonic rift in which continents are drifting apart'.

³ Cf. Ewen MacAskill, 'US 'dismay' at Israel over Gilo plan', *The Guardian*, November 19, 2009, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/18/israel-gilo-houses-us-reaction>; and 'Israeli settlement plan denounced', *BBC News*, November 18, 2009, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8364815.stm.

⁴ Cf. Tim McGirk, 'Israel's Netanyahu: Taking a Turn Toward Pragmatism?', *Time*, May 18, 2009, available at: <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1896731,00.html>.

⁵ Cf. International Crisis Group report 'Israel's Religious Right and the Question of Settlements', Crisis Group Middle East Report N°89, 20 July 2009, available at:

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/israel-palestine/089-israels-religious-right-and-the-question-of-settlements.aspx>; and Mick Dumper and Wendy Pullan, 'Jerusalem: The Cost of Failure', Chatham House, Middle East and North Africa Programme, February 2010, available at:

<http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/papers/view/-/id/835/>.

⁶ Cf. Asher Cohen and Bernard Susser, *Israel and the Politics of Jewish Identity: The Secular-Religious Impasse*, Washington: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp. 21-22.

⁷ In its opening statements, the Independence Proclamation displays an unmistakable Biblical-Messianic underpinning: 'The land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world. Exiled from Palestine, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and the restoration of their national freedom. Impelled by this historic association, Jews strove throughout the centuries to go back to the land of their fathers and regain their statehood'. In the following lines, the Declaration pledges that the newly established secular state will promote 'the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants', by upholding 'the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex'. These 'precepts of liberty, justice and peace' would nevertheless be based on the teaching of Hebrew Prophets. Finally, the Biblical term 'the Rock of Israel' (*tsur Yisrael*), featuring in the last sentence of the document, was at the centre of a notable controversy between the religious and secular factions - in particular the Orthodox rabbinic leadership and the exponents of the communist party Mapam - which bitterly disputed the degree of separation between Judaism and the Israeli state. Cf. Tom Segev, 1949: *The First Israelis*, New York: The Free Press, 1986, pp. 195-262.

⁸ For a seminal study about the relation between secular politics and religion in the modern Israel see especially Asher Cohen and Bernard Susser, *Israel and the Politics of Jewish Identity: The Secular-Religious Impasse*, op. cit.; David J Schnall, *Radical Dissent in Contemporary Israeli Politics, Cracks in the Wall*, New York: Praeger, 1979; Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Religion and Politics in Israel*, Bloomington: IUP, 1984; and Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira (ed.), *Zionism and Religion*, Hanover: BUP, 1998.

⁹ In Israel, electoral votes are turned into Knesset seats by a nation-wide proportional system with a low qualifying threshold (a not very meaningful limitation of 2%). According to many political scientists and commentators, the proportional rule in Israel has always been conducive to Parliamentary fragmentation and to small parties enjoying inordinate power over the overall political system. In view of that, the Religious Right parties - today, represented by Shas, United Torah Judaism, National Union and the Jewish Home - are small but not politically irrelevant. By threatening to withhold their support, the ultra-Orthodox parties have more often than not been able to keep in check the formation and stability of every Israeli government, and, in light of this, to obtain generous state concessions and financial benefits. Although forming neither a homogeneous nor a unified bloc, Haredi and national-religious politicians currently hold over a fifth of Knesset seats, representing some forty per cent of the Likud-led ruling coalition. It is worth remembering that in each and every ultra-Orthodox party, it is exclusive prerogative of the spiritual leaders (and not of the political party itself) to select and appoint candidates for both party leadership and general election. For an introductory yet exhaustive study on the Israeli political system see especially Keith Kyle and Joel Peters (ed.), *Whither Israel, The Domestic Challenges*, New York: Tauris, 1993, pp. 87-139. The political weigh exceeds the demographic one especially for what concerns the national religious camp. Newman reports that 'even at its peak, the [Gush Emunim] population never numbered more than 0.5 percent of

the total Israeli population'. Yet, the national religious 'representation in the Knesset, through different political parties, far exceeded its proportionality. In the Sharon Administration (2002-2006) ten members of the Knesset resided in West Bank and Gaza settlements, providing the settler movement with a foothold, which no other protest movement in Israel's history had previously succeeded in attaining in the formal corridors of government'. David Newman, 'From Hitnachalut to Hitnatkut, The Impact of Gush Emunim and the Settlement Movement on Israeli Politics and Society', *Israel Studies*, Volume 10, Number 3, 2005, p. 204.

¹⁰ See especially International Crisis Group report 'Israel's Religious Right and the Question of Settlements', op. cit., pp. 17-26.

¹¹ Relying on Peace Now demographic statistics, the I.C.G. report (Ibid., p. 2, note 11) states that 'out of a total of 289,600 settlers, 87,495 or 31 per cent live in ultra-Orthodox settlements; 62,769 (22 per cent) live in national-religious settlements, and 44,309 (15 per cent) live in secular settlements. The remainder - 92,156 (32 per cent) - live in heterogeneous settlements characterised by a variety of religious observance. Of the 67,000-strong population east of the barrier, 54 per cent live in national-religious settlements, 19 per cent in secular settlements, 9 per cent in ultra-Orthodox settlements and 19 per cent in heterogeneous settlements. Of the 220,000 settlers west of the barrier, 37 per cent live in ultra-Orthodox settlements, 36 per cent in heterogeneous settlements, 14 per cent in secular settlements and 13 per cent in national-religious settlements'. Michael Fiege provides quite different figures, arguing that, although the number of Jewish residents in the West Bank is not easy to ascertain, 'there are currently over two hundred thousand: less than half of them are religious and, of them, less than half belong to the national religious camp in some way'. Cf. Michael Fiege, *Settling in the Hearts, Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories*, Detroit: WSUP, 2009, p. 35.

¹² Fiege maintains that the different social, religious, and political motivations at the basis of the Jewish presence in the occupied territories 'can be plotted onto three north-south strips on the map. The easternmost strip consists of the Jordan Valley settlements - mainly agricultural settlements - belonging to the kibbutz or moshav movements. Most to the west, close to the Green Line and Israeli urban centres, are relatively large settlements that house those who sought to improve their quality of life. In the middle, on the mountain ridge of Judea and Samaria, are the ideological settlements, that is, those in which the settlers affiliated with the Gush Emunim today reside'. These religious residents, argues Fiege, are the 'most active in the project of appropriating the Land of Israel and struggling against territorial compromise'. Ibid., p. 4 and p. 34.

¹³ According to Genesis, the remains of the Patriarchs Abraham and Isaac and those of the Matriarch Sarah lie in Machpelah tombs, in the old city of Hebron. Rachel is buried in Bethlehem, whereas Joseph's grave is in Nablus (Biblical Shechem). Jacob's dream of the ladder joining heaven to earth (Genesis 28 :12) takes place in Beth-El. Ian Lustick argues that it is almost impossible to deny the genuine emotional attachment of the national-religious settlers to these places of Biblical memory. Cf. Ian Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputes lands, Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza*, Ithaca: CUP, 1993, pp.387-88.

¹⁴ Cf. Michael Fiege, *Settling in the Hearts, Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories*, op. cit., p. 35.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 21-38.

¹⁶ David Newman, 'From Hitnachalut to Hitnatkut, The Impact of Gush Emunim and the Settlement Movement on Israeli Politics and Society', op. cit., p. 193.

¹⁷ Gabriel A. Almond, Scott R. Appleby, Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion, The Rise of Fundamentalism around the World*, Chicago: CUP, 2003, pp. 160-61.

¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 75-85

¹⁹ Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)' in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Fundamentalisms Observed, Fundamentalism Project Volume I*, Chicago: CUP, 1991, p. 319

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Cf. Eliezer Don-Yehiya, 'The Book and the Sword: The Nationalist Yeshivot and Political Radicalism in Israel', in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Accounting for Fundamentalism, The Dynamic Character of Movements*, Chicago: CUP, 1994, pp. 264-302.

²³ Cf. Ian Lustick, *Unsettled States, Disputes lands, Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza*, op. cit., pp. 395-405.

²⁴ Cf. Michael Fiege, *Settling in the Hearts, Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories*, op. cit., pp. 269-76.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 247.

²⁵ A similar argument is put forward by David Newman, one of the major Israeli experts on the national-religious camp, who followed the historical unfolding of the Gush Emunim since its onset: 'Paradoxically, the current move towards unilateral Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip, the evacuation of all Israeli settlements in this region, and the growing consensus within

Israeli society that a two state solution to the conflict will eventually - sooner or later - become a reality, would suggest that the Gush Emunim ideology has failed to take root in the hearts of the Israeli public, over and beyond the specific adherents of the Greater Israel ideology'. David Newman, 'From Hitnachalut to Hitnatkut, The Impact of Gush Emunim and the Settlement Movement on Israeli Politics and Society', op. cit., p. 192.

²⁶Quote in the International Crisis Group report 'Israel's Religious Right and the Question of Settlements', op. cit., p. 4.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 4. Newman argues that 'the fact that both the construction of the separation wall and the disengagement from Gaza Strip had been decided by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon who, in the past, was the settlers' major political ally and who, more than any other Israeli politician, helped create much of the settlement network and infrastructure, has posed a great dilemma for the second and third-generation Gush Emunim adherents and lobbyists'. David Newman, 'From Hitnachalut to Hitnatkut, The Impact of Gush Emunim and the Settlement Movement on Israeli Politics and Society', op. cit., p. 192-93.

²⁸ International Crisis Group report 'Israel's Religious Right and the Question of Settlements', op. cit., p. 4, note 31.

²⁹ This point is made very clearly in Arthur Ertzberg's seminal study *The Zionist Idea, A Historical Analysis and Reader*, Philadelphia, JPS, 1997, pp. 15-101. See also the third section of Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira (ed.), *Zionism and Religion*, Hanover: BUP, 1998.

³⁰ Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., pp. 10-39.

³¹ These are words of Rabbi Teitelbaum, spiritual leader of Satmar Hasidim and stern anti-Zionist. Quoted in Yakov M. Rabkin, *A Threat from Within, A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, op. cit., p. 72.

³² Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., pp. 11-19.

³³ Joseph Telushkin assesses the combined impact of these two Messianic revolts on Jewish history and culture as follows: 'It is estimated that as many as one million Jews died in the Great Revolt against Rome. When people today speak of the almost two-thousand-year span of Jewish homelessness and exile, they are dating it from the failure of the revolt and the destruction of the Temple. Indeed, the Great Revolt of 66-70 ce, followed some sixty years later by the Bar Kokhba revolt, were the greatest calamities in Jewish history prior to the Holocaust. In addition to the more than one million Jews killed, these failed rebellions led to the total loss of Jewish political authority in Israel until 1948. This loss in itself exacerbated the magnitude of later Jewish catastrophes, since it precluded Israel from being used as a refuge for the large numbers of Jews fleeing persecutions elsewhere'. Cf. Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, New York: William Morrow, 1991, pp. 137-47.

³⁴ Cf. David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, New York: Schocken Books, 1986, pp. 15-27.

³⁵ Cf. Yakov M. Rabkin, *A Threat from Within, A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, op. cit., pp. 71-81.

³⁶ Cf. David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, p. 26.

³⁷ For a treatment about the theological bearing of the 3 oaths in Judaism see Reuven Firestone, 'Holy War in Modern Judaism? Mitzvah War and the Problem of the Three Vows', *Journal of American Academy of Religions*, December 2006, Vol. 74, No. 4, pp. 954-982 and Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., pp. 211-34.

³⁸ According to the general Orthodox understanding, 'the Talmud does take up the right of individuals to settle in Israel, but there is a consensus against collective settlement. Jewish settlement in the Land of the Fathers can be supported, yet a distinction must be drawn between individual *aliya* and mass activism, which the oaths are meant to restrain'. Cf. Yakov M. Rabkin, *A Threat from Within, A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, op. cit., p. 75. The same distinction is highlighted by Firestone, 'Holy War in Modern Judaism? Mitzvah War and the Problem of the Three Vows', op. cit., p. 961.

³⁹ 'The three oaths were more widely used in the twentieth century than in the nineteenth, and in the nineteenth century more than in the eighteenth. Indeed, they were more widespread in the modern era than in the Middle Ages. Naturally, during those long centuries in which neither Land of Israel nor 'ascending the wall' [returning collectively to Palestine] from Exile was a concrete social option, the very fear of such actions was overcome and repressed by the Jewish nation, and with them the importance of the oaths also faded. In contrast, when the Land of Israel was perceived as a substantive possibility, and Jews actually settled there, the warning was again frequently voiced—especially when acute Messianic agitation was involved'. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 23.

⁴⁰ Lilly Weissbrod, 'Core Values and Revolutionary Change' in David Newman (ed.), *The Impact of Gush Emunim, Politics and Settlement in the West Banks*, London: Croom Helm, 1984, p. 72

⁴¹ Cf. Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, New York: Basics Books, 1981, p. 3.

⁴² The Rabbi's parable is quoted in Yakov M. Rabkin, *A Threat from Within, A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

⁴³ Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., pp. 40-78.

⁴⁴ Cf. David Novak, 'Judaism, Zionism, Messianism: Telling Them Apart', *First Things*, February 1991.

⁴⁵ Cf. Jerusalem Talmud, 24. According to Rabbinic Orthodoxy, 'whatever effort secular Zionism might make, it would be impossible for the Jews to establish and sustain themselves in modern Israel without living by the Torah'. Without the Torah the Jews could not exist as Jews even for a day, whereas "they have existed without *Eretz Israel* for two thousand years'. Elhanan Bunim Wasserman, *The Epoch of the Messiah*, New York: Ohr Elchonon, 1976, p.33 quoted in Yakov M. Rabkin, *A Threat from Within, A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, op. cit., p. 89. See also Samuel Heilman, *Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry*, New York: Schocken Books, 1992, pp. 190-99.

⁴⁶ Cf. Yakov M. Rabkin, *A Threat from Within, A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 212.

⁴⁸ With regards to the dangers arising from living in *Eretz Israel* in pre-Messianic times, Rabkin observes: 'Traditionally, the Land of Israel is considered more fragile, more sensitive, than any other. The transgressions of Jews in other lands might have no serious repercussions, but in Israel the slightest transgression takes on enormous proportions and might cause a major calamity. (...) The responsibility that accompanies living upon the Land lends any attempt to settle it enormous potential consequences. The fear of violating the Torah commandments in the Holy Land is another of the substantive reasons that was to dissuade simple Jews from settling in Israel before the advent of the Messiah'. Yakov M. Rabkin, *A Threat from Within, A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, op. cit., p. 67 and p. 68. According to Orthodoxy, observes Ravitzky, the Jews living in *Eretz Israel* are "at risk of multiplying their transgressions" rather "than expiating their sins". Whoever dares to go and live in the Land of Israel before the appointed time would have no life at all. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 24.

⁴⁹ Ibid. pp. 17-19.

⁵⁰ The designation is based on a verse from Isaiah 66:5: "Hear the word of Yahweh, you who tremble ('haredim') at His word.

⁵¹ For an examination of the religious conceptions, attitudes and values framing the lifestyle of the Haredi communities in Israel see Samuel Heilman and Menachem Friedman, 'Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Jews: The Case of the Haredim' in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Fundamentalisms Observed, Fundamentalism Project*, vol. I, Chicago: UCP, 1999, pp. 197-263; Samuel Heilman, *Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry*, op. cit.; and Nurit Stadler, 'Is profane work an obstacle to salvation? The case of Ultra Orthodox (Haredi) Jews in contemporary Israel', *Sociology of Religion*, 63.4, Winter 2002.

⁵² It is commonly recognized that the Palestinian demographic growth in Israel and the occupied territories represents a major strategic issue for Israel. But the proportion of ultra-Orthodox Haredi Jews is also exponentially growing (three times as fast as the rest of the population). The most updated and accurate account of the Haredi demographics is provided by the International Crisis Group report 'Israel's Religious Right and the Question of Settlements', Crisis Group Middle East Report N°89, 20 July 2009. At page 12, the author states: 'The dynamics of state/ultra-orthodox relations have changed significantly over time. The [Haredi] community was on the defensive 60 years ago; today it is more self-confident. Due to its high birth rate, it has grown eight-fold since 1948 and is Israel's fastest growing sector. It numbers around 750,000, some 10 per cent of the overall population and some 20 per cent of Israel's first-graders'.

⁵³ For an overall treatment of these two movements see Menachem Mor, *Jewish Sects, Religious Movements and Political Parties*, Nebraska: CUP, 1992. Edah Haredit represents Israel's largest anti-Zionist Haredi identity, making up the 25% of the 250,000 ultra-Orthodox Jews living in East Jerusalem. The I.C.G. report describes its anti-secularist stand as follows: 'Edah Haredit prohibits receipt of government funds and operates a self-financing, Yiddish-speaking school system for some 6,000 pupils. Some followers maintain a different time zone, four and a half hours ahead of "European" (Israeli) time; seek treatment in Palestinian rather than state hospitals; wear stickers on festivals with the slogan 'Jew not a Zionist'; blame Zionism for the demise of pre-1948 Jewish communities in Hebron, Nablus and Gaza and even Eastern Europe; and eschew holy sites under Israeli control'. Cf. I.C.G., 'Israel's Religious Right and the Question of Settlements', op. cit., note 114, p.12. The most extreme anti-Zionist attitude is however embraced by the Neturei Karta (the 'guardians of the city'). Followers of Satmar Hasidism mainly compose this small yet vociferous movement, which was established in 1935, as a schismatic offshoot of Agudat Yisrael. As any other Haredi group, the Neturei Karta's

communities predominantly live in East Jerusalem, within a self-imposed enclave system, paying no taxes and with no financial aid from the state. They receive significant support from sympathetic ultra-Orthodox Jews in the United States and the UK, especially London and Manchester. Cf. David J Schnall, *Radical Dissent in Contemporary Israeli Politics, Cracks in the Wall*, op. cit., pp. 125-37; Aviezer Ravitzky, 'Munkacs and Jerusalem: Ultra-Orthodox Opposition to Zionism and Agudaism' in S. Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira (ed.), *Zionism and Religion*, Brandeis: BUP, 1998, pp.77-8; for a discussion of the Neturei Karta's anti-Zionist views as diametrically opposed to those mobilizing the national-religious aspirations of the Gush Emunim movement see Menachem Friedman, 'Jewish Zealots: Conservative versus Innovative', in Emmanuel Sivan and Menachem Friedman (ed.), *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East*, New York: Sunny Press, 1990, pp. 127-141.

⁵⁴ Aviezer Ravitzky, 'Ultra-Orthodoxy and Anti-Zionism' in Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, William Scott Green (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*, Vol. 3, London: Continuum, 1999.

⁵⁵ The Israeli state exempts both anti and non-Zionist Haredim from conscription in the IDF (which is otherwise compulsory for the rest of Israeli young generations), recognizing them the right to fully dedicate their lives to Torah studies. Commenting on this fact, former Deputy Prime Minister Yosef Lapid stated that ultra-Orthodox Jews 'represent God in God's country, but don't defend God's country'. Quoted in Tim Franks, 'Israel's other demographic challenge', BBC News, Jerusalem, 3 September 2007. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6970195.stm

⁵⁶ Aviezer Ravitzky, 'Ultra-Orthodoxy and Anti-Zionism', op. cit.

⁵⁷ Cf. Maurice Chittenden, 'Rabbi claims Holocaust dead deserved it', *The Sunday Times*, December 17, 2006. See in particular the points XIII and XIV in Rabbi Ahron Cohen's speech 'Orthodox Jewish Attitude to the Holocaust'. The speech was delivered by the Neturei Karta's leading spiritual figure at the International Conference 'Review of the Holocaust', Teheran 11-12 December 2006, available at: <http://www.nkusa.org/activities/Speeches/2006Iran-ACohen.cfm>

⁵⁸ Cf. Michael Shashar, 'Israel and the Territories: Religious Attitudes', op. cit.

⁵⁹ Gerald Cromer, 'Withdrawal and Conquest: Two Aspects of the Haredi Response to Modernity' in Laurence J. Silberstein (ed.), *Jewish Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective, Religion, Ideology, and the Crisis of Modernity*, New York: NYUP, 1993, p. 167.

⁶⁰ Cf. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, 'The Religious Significance of the State of Israel' in *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, op. cit., pp.214-19. Gideon Aran charges that Haredi communities came to live in the Zionist state for motivations that 'surely included the desire to escape from the challenges of the non-Jewish European environment, to seek a refuge of traditionalism and fortify themselves there against the tide of Modernity'. Gideon Aran, 'From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion' in Calvin Goldscheider and Jacob Neusner, *Social Foundations of Judaism*, New York: Prentice-Hall, 1990, p. 267.

⁶¹ Agudat Israel is an Ashkenazi religious-political party, which was established in 1912 by Polish, German and Hungarian rabbis with the purpose to advance ultra-Orthodoxy in Jewish life. It initially opposed secular Zionism, yet always maintaining an ambiguous attitude towards the idea of a Jewish return to the Land of Israel. Its staunch opposition turned into a more pragmatic approach as a Jewish State was founded in Palestine. The Haredi organization signed the May 1948 Declaration of Independence and negotiated an agreement to take part in state affairs in exchange of subsidies supporting its religious institutions and concessions on critical ultra-Orthodox matters. Still, Agudat Israel's official manifesto does not envisage participation in Zionist politics. However, especially after the Likud party took power in 1977, the Haredi party provided key support for coalition governments - in which from time to time its representatives have held ministerial positions. Today, it is part of the ruling coalition as United Torah Judaism - a Haredi alliance between Degel HaTorah and Agudat Israel, holding 5 seats in the 18th Knesset. The Shas party was formed in 1984, under the spiritual guidance of the former chief Sephardic rabbi of Israel, Ovadia Yosef. The party primarily represents Jews of Middle Eastern and North African origins. Similarly to Agudat Israel, Shas defines itself as a non-Zionist party and calls for the creation of a theocratic rule in place of the secular state, but nevertheless seeks accommodation with the current political institutions for the sake of the ultra-Orthodox self-preservation. After the last elections in which it won 11 seats, Shas party joined Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government and holds four cabinet posts. Its current leader, Eli Yishai, is one of four Deputy Prime Ministers, and Minister of Internal Affairs.

⁶² In contemporary Israel, the dayananim (the rabbinical judges) exert full jurisdiction over critical matters such as Jewish marriage, divorce and conversion. This represents a critical concession, which the Haredim bargained with the Zionist state in exchange of their votes. Although the salaries of the dayananim are subsidized by public finances, their rulings remain entirely autonomous, being depended only on the rabbinical leadership. Cf. Alan L. Mittleman, 'Fundamentalism and Political Development: The Case of Agudat Yisrael' in Laurence J. Silberstein (ed.), *Jewish Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective*, op. cit., pp. 216-35.

⁶³ Cf. Beth McLeod, 'Religious row holds up Israeli hospital', BBC News, 5 April 2010, Ashkelon. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8597608.stm

⁶⁴ Quoted in I.C.G., 'Israel's Religious Right and the Question of Settlements', op. cit., note 112, p.12.

⁶⁵ Ibid p.12.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ From the late Sixties until the end of the Nineties, Agudat Yisrael's position on the territorial issue was summed up by the following official statement: 'The Land of Israel was given to us from an inheritance by our Creator and we have never abandoned our rights to it...We await daily for our complete deliverance. We shall make peace with our neighbours on the basis of God's promise to his people, strategic necessity, political expediency, and international law'. Quoted in Stewart Reiser, *The Politics of Leverage: The National Religious Party of Israel and Its Influence on Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: Harvard University, 1984, p. 45. This argument was strongly advocated not only by Rabbi Eliezer Shach, Agudat Yisrael's leading figure, but also by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, the controversial spiritual guide of the Sephardi political party Shas. Cf. Laura S. Zarembski, 'Israel's Religious Right - Not a Monolith', *Middle East Quarterly*, June 2000.

⁶⁸ Laura S. Zarembski makes clear that East Jerusalem, although included in principle, cannot be part of the bargain for two reasons: 'First, the preservation of Jerusalem as Israel's capital is seen as critical to the identity of both Israel and the Jewish people, so conceding or dividing Jerusalem would be harmful to the Jewish people and is unacceptable. Second, Jerusalem is seen as holier than any other place in Israel: The land of Israel is holier than all other countries and Jerusalem is holier than all other parts of Israel. Accordingly, Jerusalem is protected by additional considerations which inhibit its concession but do not hinder the possibility of creative solutions'. Cf. Ibid p. 3-4. Haredi uncompromising stand towards the Holy City has been further strengthened in 2003, as Uri Lupolianski, an ultra-Orthodox Haredi Jew, replaced Ehud Olmert as mayor of Jerusalem.

⁶⁹ From the Second Intifada onwards, fear of Arab terrorism and mistrust in the Palestinian authorities grew strong within the non-Zionist Haredi community, producing a radical shift in their opinions about the option of brokering land for a diplomatic agreement leading towards a two-State solution. This transition towards a more right-wing stand was particular evident in Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's public speeches. In April 2001, during a sermon given to mark the Jewish festival of Passover, the Rabbi called for the annihilation of Arabs, maintaining the senselessness of any attempt to negotiate a peace deal between a human and an animal such as a 'viper'. He later specified that his comments were referring only to 'Arab murderers and terrorists and not the Arab people as a whole'. Cf. 'Rabbi calls for annihilation of Arabs', *BBC News, Middle East*, 10 April 2001. Available at:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1270038.stm

During a sermon given in March 2005, the Rabbi not only denied Shas party's political support to Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan from the Gaza Strip, but even called on God to 'strike down' the Israeli Prime Minister for his 'sin' of undermining the integrity of Eretz Israel and endangering Jewish lives by doing so. Cf. 'Rabbi says God will punish Sharon', *BBC News, Middle East*, 9 March 2005. Available at:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4333099.stm

As the I.C.G report makes very clear, the Haredi pronouncement against territorial compromise with the Arabs is today even more steadfast. See I.C.G., 'Israel's Religious Right and the Question of Settlements', op. cit., pp.12-16.

⁷⁰ Cf. Laura S. Zarembski, 'Israel's Religious Right - Not a Monolith', op. cit., p.4.

⁷¹ Cf. David Biale, 'Zionism' in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religions*, London: MacMillan, 2005, pp. 9982-82.

⁷² Cf. Erica Chernofsky, 'Set apart for God and Torah', *BBC News, Middle East*, 19 August 2008. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7553860.stm

⁷³ Cf. Samuel C. Heilman, 'Guides of the Faithful, Contemporary Religious Zionist Rabbis' in A. Scott Appleby, *Spokesmen for the Despised*, op. cit., pp. 328-31.

⁷⁴ Cf. David Novak, 'Judaism, Zionism, Messianism: Telling Them Apart', op. cit.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Cf. Gideon Aran, *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Land, The Spiritual Authorities of Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* in R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Spokesmen for the Despised, Fundamentalist Leaders in the Middle East*, op. cit., pp. 294-327.

⁷⁷ Cf. Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism, The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, op. cit., p.188-189.

⁷⁸ Aran charges that Kookism 'involves not just Kook the father but al Kook the son: the father is generally seen through the prism of the son and the son, with the halo of the father. The link between the two Kook is the key to understanding Gush Emunim, which discovered first the son and later, through him, the father'. Gideon Aran, *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Land, The Spiritual Authorities of Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, op. cit., p. 295. In this regard Ravitzky

(*Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 123) reports that Rabbi Zvi Yehudah's main contribution to Religious Zionism consists in 'his translation of the broad, deep teachings of his father into the language of action. Though he himself was not a man of action, he was able to bring his father's exalted ideas into focus in such a way that when, at just the right moment, they encountered a public yearning to act, they turned into a powerful movement. (...) Naturally, the translation into the language of action took a heavy price, coming at the expense of the intellectual depth and breadth of Kook's teachings'.

⁷⁹ History and theo-political ambitions of the *Gahelet* are extensively treated in Gideon Aran, 'From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion' in Calvin Goldscheider and Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Social Foundation of Judaism*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990, pp. 259-81.

⁸⁰ Cf. Cf. Samuel C. Heilman, 'Guides of the Faithful, Contemporary Religious Zionist Rabbis', op. cit., p. 330.

⁸¹ Cf. Moshe Hellinger, 'Political Theology in the Thought of 'Merkaz HaRav' Yeshiva and its Profound Influence on Israeli Politics and Society since 1967', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 9, No. 4, December 2008.

⁸² Founded by the very Rabbi Kook the father in 1924, the Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva today enrolls some 500 students primarily of high-school age. Many of these attend special courses (the Hesder Yeshiva) combining Talmudic studies with service in combat units in the IDF. That the Merkaz HaRav represents the ideological stronghold of the national-religious movement in the West Bank has been tragically confirmed in March 2008, when a terroristic attack carried out by a Palestinian gunman killed eight of its young members.

⁸³ Cf. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York: Schocken Books, 1996, pp. 244-286.

⁸⁴ Cf. Gideon Aran, *Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism, The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel* in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalism Observed*, Chicago: CUP, 1991, pp. 265-344.

⁸⁵ Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, op. cit., p. 261.

⁸⁶ Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., p. 44.

⁸⁷ Cf. Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead, Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*, Schocken Books, New York, 1991, pp. 82-87.

⁸⁸ Scholem argues that the debate about nature and origin of Evil represents one of the key doctrinal issues motivating Cabbalistic speculation and at the same time differentiating it from Rabbinic theology and philosophy, which in turn give little thought to the problem. Cf. Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, op. cit., pp. 122-128.

⁸⁹ The original breaking, observes Scholem, introduces an inherent deficiency in Creation as after it nothing is no longer perfect in the cosmos: 'the divine light which should have subsisted in specific forms and places appointed to it from the beginning is no longer in the proper place because the vessels were broken, and thereafter all things went awry. There is nothing that was not damaged by the breaking, nothing is in the place appointed for it'. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., p. 45.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 47

⁹¹ Scholem charges that from this positive evaluation of evil's cathartic role derives that distinctive pure antinomianism imbuing the ideology of those Jewish Messianic movements, which took inspiration from the Lurianic Cabbala. See especially the essay 'Sabbatianism and Mystical Heresy' in Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, op. cit., pp. 287-324. The Mystical-Cabbalistic idea that "a full descend into the realm of evil is necessary to vanquish it from within" is highly compatible with the catastrophic logic underpinning the Apocalyptic syndrome (salvation can be achieved only after humanity has sunk to its 'lowest ebb'), as illustrated in the second chapter of the present study.

⁹² Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 106.

⁹³ The difference between the two Messianic movements can be explained by taking into consideration how they respectively understand the redemptive process. In light of its intensified antinomian and Apocalyptic charge, Sabbatianism seems to subscribe to what Scholem defines as the catastrophic-utopian strand of Jewish Messianism. We shall see that Kookism instead falls within Schwartz's conceptual category of Naturalistic Messianism as it views redemption as a progressive movement towards mundane perfection without substantial breakthroughs. It is worth remembering that, although many scholars treated them as basically distinct ideal types, in every Jewish Messianic manifestation the Apocalyptic and Naturalistic modes coexist, often merging and overlapping in response to mutated historical circumstances. Cf. Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, op. cit., pp. 8-15; *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., pp. 3-4 and p. 7; and Dov Schwartz, *Faith at the Crossroads: a Theological Profile of Religious Zionism*, op. cit., pp. 1-4.

⁹⁴ David Biale, 'Gershom Scholem on Jewish Messianism' in Marc Saperstein (ed.), *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*, New York: NYUP, 1992, pp. 525-29 and Gideon Aran, 'Redemption as Catastrophe: The Gospel of Gush Emunim' in

Emmanuel Sivan and Manachem Friedman (ed.), *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East*, op. cit., p. 160.

⁹⁵ 'The primal flaw must be mended so that all things can return to their proper place, to their original posture. Man and God are partners in this enterprise. After the original breaking God began the process of reparation, but He left its completion to man'. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., p. 46.

⁹⁶ Ibid p. 47.

⁹⁷ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 82

⁹⁸ 'Unlike Cabbalistic sages, who saw redemption as hinging entirely on spiritual rectification and the fulfilment of a mystical, cosmic mission, this activist school gives precedence to perfecting this world and achieving historical, political fulfilment. For them, it is the Zionist undertaking, in all its concreteness, that embodies the needed collective rectification and truly reflects the Jewish people's response to the divine call. And it is Zionism that, in the last analysis, prepares the way for universal personal redemption as well'. Ibid.

⁹⁹ Cf. Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, op. cit., pp. 40-41; and Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion*, Princeton: PUP, 2005, pp. 17-28.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 25.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., pp. 39-48; *Kabbalah*, op. cit., pp. 165-68; *Major Trend in Jewish Mysticism*, op. cit., pp. 244-86.

¹⁰² Cf. Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, op. cit., p.43

¹⁰³ Cf. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trend in Jewish Mysticism*, op. cit., pp. 246-51; and David Biale, 'Gershom Scholem on Jewish Messianism', op. cit., p. 530.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 531.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. David Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition, An Ancient People Debating its Future*, Yale: YUP, 1984, pp. 32-33.

¹⁰⁶ Gideon Aran, 'Redemption as Catastrophe: The Gospel of Gush Emunim', op. cit., p. 163.

¹⁰⁷ 'Exile is a disturbance of the natural order of history, and every disturbance requires to be set right again. The exile of Israel and the destruction of our Temple are an [anomalous] exception to the order of the universe, and it is known that whatever is a deviation from the order of the universe has temporary existence'. Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, op. cit., p. 65.

¹⁰⁸ In several passages of his studies, Scholem makes clear that, within the Lurianic schemes, Israel's exile from and restoration in the Holy Land become the two polarities in a cosmic tension. Israel's intra-historical 'oscillations' between deficiency and fulfilment therefore define the condition of the whole universe. See Ibid. pp. 38-42.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, op. cit., p. 195. Quite interestingly, Avineri reports that the Jewish philosopher Nachman Krochmal (1785-1840) attempted to integrate the Jewish universalism into the conceptual framework of Hegel's idealism: 'In Krochmal's writings the Jews themselves appear as the bearers of absolute universality. The Jews, not the nations of the world, are truly universal; it is the Gentiles who are particularistic. For Krochmal, the people of Israel is elevated to the only historical phenomenon which is simultaneously meta-historical, Hence the very historical existence of the Jewish people, far from being an anachronism and an aberration, is itself of philosophical significance. The people of Israel link the eternal and the temporal, the philosophical and the historical. The roots of the Jewish people are, like those of all other people, in history, yet its *telos* transcends the temporalities and externalities of mere historical existence. The Jewish people is hence *am olam* - in the double meaning of the term - a universal as well as an eternal people'. Ibid. p. 21.

¹¹⁰ Ella Belfer, 'The Land of Israel and Historical Dialectics in the Thought of Rav Kook: Zionism and Messianism' in Lawrence J. Kaplan and David Shatz, *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality*, New York: NYUP, 1995, p. 266.

¹¹¹ For an appreciation of the humanist and inclusive values in the teaching of Kook the father see Steven T. Katz (ed.), *The Essential Agus, The Writing of Jacob B. Agus*, New York: NYUP, 1997, pp. 15-17, and pp. 169-75. Moshe Hellinger observes that 'Rav Kook's complex teaching contains built-in tensions between two opposite poles: universalism (along with its liberal democratic implications) and Jewish particularism (which by implication dissociates itself from the character and values of the liberal democratic West)'. Cf. Moshe Hellinger, 'Political Theology in the Thought of 'Merkaz HaRav' Yeshiva and its Profound Influence on Israeli Politics and Society since 1967', op. cit., p. 534.

¹¹² Samuel C. Heilman, 'Guides of the Faithful, Contemporary Religious Zionist Rabbis', op. cit., p. 331.

¹¹³ Words of Rabbi A Y Kook reported in David Samson and Tzvi Fishman, *Torat Eretz Yisrael*, Jerusalem: TEY Publications, 1991.

¹¹⁴ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 79.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., pp. 4-5. Ravitzky points out that Rav Kook was the second person using the term 'the State of Israel'. Kook was preceded by Rabbi Shapira of Horadna, who deployed this term in 1900 in the context of his criticism of secular Zionism.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Gideon Aran, 'Redemption as a Catastrophe: The Gospel of Gush Emunim', op. cit., pp. 161-63; *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Land, The Spiritual Authorities of Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, op. cit., pp. 300-2.

¹¹⁷ Cf. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Beyond Tradition and Modernity, Changing Religions in a Changing World*, London: Athlone, 1976, p. 56.

¹¹⁸ BBC Middle East correspondent Tim Franks encapsulated the essence of the early days 'kibbutz life' in rural collective farms as 'a deeply unfashionable paean to a socialist idyll, which in turn had been a foundation of the original Zionist dream'. Cf. Tim Franks, 'Remaining impartial in the Middle East', *BBC Radio Four*, 10 June 2010. For a general treatment of the ideology and history defining the kibbutz movement see Arthur Hertzberg (ed.), *The Zionist Idea, A Historical Analysis and Reader*, op. cit., pp. 329-95; Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology*, op. cit., pp. 166-232; and Anita Shapira, 'The Religious Motifs of the Labor Movement' in Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinhartz, and Anita Shapira (ed.), *Zionism and Religion*, op. cit., pp. 251-71.

¹¹⁹ Cf. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Beyond Tradition and Modernity, Changing Religions in a Changing World*, op. cit., p. 57.

¹²⁰ Cf. Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, op. cit., pp. 192-93.

¹²¹ Gideon Aran, 'Redemption as a Catastrophe: The Gospel of Gush Emunim', op. cit., p. 170. Dov Schwartz explained Religious Zionism's theology of the profane by drawing from the Marxian categories. According to Rabbi Kook's view, secular Zionism renders visible its 'super-structure', a sort of external body acting in the mundane-material realm. But, with a more attentive eye, one may appreciate that Zionism also possesses a 'structure', an innermost core orienting the goals and modus operandi of the movement (that is, the super-structure), which is inherently sacred, as it aspires to eternal spiritual life even though the movement itself might be unaware of it. Cf. Dov Schwartz, *Faith at a Crossroad, A Theological Profile of Religious Zionism*, op. cit., pp. 156-92.

¹²² Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction, Reason in History*, New York: NYUP, 1975.

¹²³ Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, op. cit., p. 193.

¹²⁴ According to Kook, the godless and blasphemist Zionists will become aware of their true mission with the full bloom of the Messianic era. With the total 'uncovering of light and holiness implicit in the [Zionist] national spirit', the secularists 'will be constrained to realize that they are immersed and rooted in the life of God and bathed in the radiant sanctity that comes from above'. Ibid. p. 194.

¹²⁵ Cf. Michael Shashar, 'Israel and the Territories: Religious Attitudes', op. cit., p. 438.

¹²⁶ Cf. Rabbi Gideon Weitzman, 'From Zion to Jerusalem and Back Again, The Jerusalem Day', Yeshiva.org.il, available at: www.yeshiva.org.il/midrash/Shiur.asp?id=2245

¹²⁷ Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, op. cit., p. 193.

¹²⁸ The geographic limits of Eretz Israel vary enormously in both Israeli religious and secular circles. The most commonly accepted understandings are based on the details provided by Genesis 15:18-21, Numbers 34:1-15 and Ezekiel 47:13-20, but these three conventional sets of borders do exhaust at all the scope of the Biblical sources. Cf. Eliezer Schweid, *The Land of Israel: National Home Or Land of Destiny*, New York, AUP, 1985, pp.15-32; and W. D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*, Berkeley: UCP, 1982, pp. 1-28.

¹²⁹ Tal highlights how 'the boundaries of Canaan at the time of the sons of Noah and their generations are not those promised to Abraham and his descendants at the Covenant Between the Pieces [Gen. 10:19; 15: 18-21], and both of these differ from the boundaries promised to the children of Israel in the desert [Ex. 23:31]; or prior to entering the Land [Deut. 1:7; 33:2-4]'. Further, there are other major incongruities between the various geographical descriptions contained in the Pentateuch the Eretz Israel prophesized by Ezekiel as a fulfilment for the End of Days [47:13]. Cf. Uriel Tal, 'Contemporary Hermeneutics and Self-Views on the Relationship between State and Land', op. cit., p. 325.

¹³⁰ Uriel Tal notes that the primary source of this normative approach to the Eretz Ysrael is traceable in Nachmanides' commentary to the fourth positive commandment of Maimonides' *Sefer ha-Mitzvot* (the codified enumeration of the commandments). Nachmanides charges that the Jewish people are 'commanded to take possession of the Land given by the Lord to [their] forefathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and not to leave it in the hands of any other people or allow it to lie waste' as the Lord said unto them: 'You must take possession of the Land and

settle there, for to you I have given the land to occupy [Numbers 33:53]'. In Nachmanides' commentary, this commandment is associated with a detailed definition of Eretz Ysrael's boundaries taken directly from Deuteronomy 1:7: 'and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all its neighboring places, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale and in the south, and by the seaside, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the River Euphrates'. Cf. Uriel Tal, 'Contemporary Hermeneutics and Self-Views on the Relationship between State and Land' in Lawrence A. Hoffman (ed.), *The Land of Israel, Jewish Perspectives*, Notre Dame: NDU, 1986, pp. 321-22; and 'Foundations of a Political Messianic Trend in Israel', op. cit., point 15.

¹³¹ Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 25.

¹³² Samuel C. Heilman, 'Guides of the Faithful, Contemporary Religious Zionist Rabbis' in A. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Spokesmen for the Despised*, op. cit., p.332.

¹³³ Kook viewed the physical possession of the Land not as mere national criterion of territoriality, but as an irrenounceable means to unify the Jewish people and secure its survival: 'Eretz Ysrael is part of the very essence of our nationhood; it is bound organically to its very life and inner being. Human reason, even at its most sublime, cannot begin to understand the unique holiness of Eretz Israel; it cannot stir the depths of love for the land that are dormant within our people. What Eretz Israel means to the Jew can be felt only through the Spirit of the Lord which is in our people as a whole, through the spiritual cast of the Jewish soul, which radiates its characteristic influence to every healthy emotion. This higher light shines forth to the degree that the spirit of divine holiness fills the hearts of the saints and scholars of Israel with heavenly life and bliss'. Quoted in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea, A Historical Analysis and Reader*, op. cit., p. 419-20. On Religious Zionism's distinctive attachment to Eretz Ysrael see also Eliezer Schweid, *The Land of Israel: National Home or Land of Destiny*, op. cit., pp. 171-86.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea, A Historical Analysis and Reader*, op. cit., p. 420-21. Rabbi Kook confronts the Orthodox opposition to a premature return to Palestine by arguing that anyone who relinquishes the belief in the return to Zion ultimately relinquishes his identity as a Jew. Hope in a re-ingathering into the Land of the Fathers is 'the continuing source of the distinctive nature of Judaism' and at the same times 'the force that sustains Judaism in the Diaspora'.

¹³⁵ 'A Jewish person in the Diaspora may fulfil all Commandments of the Law and see himself as a completely pious and devout Jew, but because he lives outside the Land of Israel, there is a central ingredient lacking in his Jewishness. Living in Exile not only distorts those Commandments, which are directly related to the Land but also the life of a Jew outside the Land of Israel. Living in the Diaspora means leading a life of unholiness, and only living in the Land of Israel can extricate a person from this predicament'. Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, op. cit., p. 190.

¹³⁶ Eliezer Don-Yehiya highlights how the negation of *Galut* represents the hallmark of the Religious Zionist mind and at the same time a doctrinal expedient to increase the weight of the national-religious Orthodoxy over that of other Jewish religious authorities both in Israel and the Diaspora. Rabbi Kook's polemic accent is therefore placed on the dichotomy between the sense of empowerment and integrity reachable within the sacred perimeter of the Holy Land and that of powerlessness and fragmentation otherwise distinguishing Jewish life outside of it. In all the rabbi's public statements and religious treaties, exilic life within non-Jewish societies is inevitably associated with separation, disintegration, individuality and anomie while redemption through the re-ingathering in Eretz Ysrael expresses the Jewish people's national-collective unity and harmony. Cf. Eliezer Don-Yehiya, 'The Negation of Galut in Religious Zionism', *Modern Judaism*, 1992: 12 (2), pp. 129-155.

¹³⁷ Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, op. cit., p. 190.

¹³⁸ Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 97.

¹³⁹ Cf. Dov Schwartz, *Religious Zionism, History and Ideology*, op. cit., pp. 29-30, and p. 40

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 45. Schwartz sees the creation of the Mizrachi movement in 1902 - the first Religious Zionist organization encompassing the educational, social welfare and settlement activity of Israeli society - as 'a genuine revolution by which the Rabbinic world entered institutionalized politics and, to a some extent, assumed the demands imposed on Jewish Orthodoxy by Modernity'. Ibid. pp. 30-32.

¹⁴¹ Schwartz emphasizes that, from a Religious Zionist standpoint, 'manual labour heals the disease of exile because it brings to the creation of a new religious individual healthy in body and soul'. As opposed to 'exilic' passivity, the Jewish awakening is supposed to take place in two dimensions: in the theological-spiritual realm, by stating that God is omnipresent in nature, and His essence can be progressively revealed through manual labour; in the social realm, by claiming that human productivity within the Land of Israel is a necessary element in the personal and collective realization: labour makes human life healthy, allows individuals to

master of their own fate and, in so doing, advance the overall redemptive process. Ibid. pp. 44-45.

¹⁴² Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 112.

¹⁴³ Within Rabbi Kook's understanding of the Messianic process, observes Aran, 'the traditional relation of redemption to repentance, and of the future to the present, is completely reversed'. This reversal induces a drastic resetting within the religious norms and priorities: 'in the rabbinic tradition, which opens with the ancient sages and continues through to contemporary Orthodox authorities, redemption is usually dependent upon repentance. It is incumbent upon the people of Israel to improve themselves with respect to relations with others and relations with God, as a result of which personal redemption and the redemption of the world are ensured'. According to Kook redemption will be instead fulfilled immediately through Jewish presence and labour in Eretz Ysrael and 'repentance before God will follow suit'. Put differently, the traditional category of passive repentance is subsumed within and subordinated to the new category of redemption through human activism: 'repentance takes place within redemption, and because redemption is already at its peak, repentance has also naturally begun and will soon be visible'. Cf. Gideon Aran, *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Land, The Spiritual Authorities of Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* in R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Spokesmen for the Despised, Fundamentalist Leaders in the Middle East*, op. cit., p. 308.

¹⁴⁴ Aran argues that 'Jewish Fundamentalism is particularly meticulous about fulfilling the countless religious commandments and norms distinguishing ultra-Orthodox belonging. Nonetheless, the Torah-centred settlers show the utmost zeal as they consider the commandment to conquer and settle the Land of Israel. The fulfilment of single precept is of paramount importance in the Cabalistic endeavour to redeem and to be redeemed. GE members support their material, almost carnal commitment to the hills of Judea and Samaria, by citing selected passages in the holy texts, which declare that the commandment to settle the Land of the Patriarchs is considered tantamount to all other commandments'. Cf. Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., p. 309.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 310-11.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Robert Paine, 'Topophilia, Zionism, and 'certainty', Making a place out of the space that became Israel again' in Wendy James (ed.), *The Pursuit of Certainty, Religious and Cultural Formulations*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 172-73.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., p. 309.

¹⁴⁸ 'I believe with perfect faith that if the Holy One, blessed be He, gave us the land. He will never take it away from us. The Holy One, blessed be He, does not perform miracles in vain. It is not for the government of Israel to decide on the integrity of the Land of Israel'. In the aftermath of the Six-Day War, Rabbi Ya'akov Filber spoke these words to religious members of the Israeli cabinet in order to dissuade them from accepting a territorial compromise with Egypt. Later, Filber put the same line of thought in writing: 'Since the liberation of the Land of Israel [in 1967], not a day has passed without an attempt, either through diplomacy or military attrition, to turn the clock back. Not a single country, including Israel, has affirmed that the whole of the Land of Israel must remain in [our] hands. Yet, miraculously, no conditions have been created to force Israel to withdraw, even a little, from the borders that came into being as a result of the Six-Day War'. In the following years Rabbi Filber would become dean of the Merkaz Harav Yeshivah. Quoted in Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., pp. 131-33.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., p. 311. Moshe Idel show how, under the Cabalistic categories of redemption, the Land of Israel experiences a process of mythic-ritualistic 'sexualisation': Eretz Ysrael comes to symbolize the supernatural female power of *Malkhut*, which can be 'impregnated' by the corresponding male power of *Tiferet* by means of the Jewish righteous dwelling on its soil. Without such a mystical union between opposite cosmic principles (an union achieved by 'the complete return of the tribes of Israel to their peculiar areas in the Land'), the "Divine Pleroma fails to reach its supreme and perfect status". Cf. Moshe Idel, 'The Land of Israel in Medieval Kabbalah' in Lawrence A. Hoffman (ed.), *The Land of Israel, Jewish Perspectives*, op. cit., pp. 170-87.

¹⁵⁰ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 132.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Gwyn Rowley, 'The Land of Israel: A Reconstructionist Approach' in David Newman (ed.), *The Impact of Gush Emunim*, op. cit., pp. 125-35.

¹⁵² In keeping with his Mystical-Cabalistic speculations, Kook viewed the Jewish physical settling in and toiling of Eretz Ysrael as two critical 'spiritual activities' capable of returning the cosmic powers of darkness into the original source of light, which was shattered by the original Breaking of the Vessels: 'the merit of the holiness of the Land - when the [Jewish] nation maintains its courageous link with it - has the power to reverse evil and to raise it to the highest vaults of holiness. (...) Indeed, the sparks of holiness are released by the practical work in Eretz

Ysrael'. Words of Abraham Isaac Kook quoted in Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, op. cit., pp. 419-22.

¹⁵³ Moshe Idel charges that the political charge of Gush Emunim derives from the theological claim that the Jewish Messianic ideal can be realized in external reality and through human activism.

Cf. Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, Yale: YUP, 1998, pp. 324-26.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., p. 292. The principle of 'Kavvanah embodies the mystical-theurgic assumption that the spiritual effort behind a ritual act can uplift man closer to the godhead, enabling him to arouse it and assist it in rectifying the cosmos'. Ibid. p. 308.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Uriel Tal, 'Contemporary Hermeneutics and Self-Views on the Relationship between State and Land' in Lawrence A. Hoffman (ed.), *The Land of Israel, Jewish Perspectives*, op. cit., pp. 327-29.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 328-29.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Michael Fiege, *Settling in the Hearts, Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories*, op. cit., p. 22.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., p. 291.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Vered Levy-Barzilai, 'Ben Artzi's Last Stand', *Haaretz*, April 30, 2004 quoted in Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion*, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Samuel C. Heilman, 'Guides of the Faithful, Contemporary Religious Zionist Rabbis', op. cit., pp. 331-37.

¹⁶² Quoted in Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., p. 292.

¹⁶³ Ibid. p. 293. Porat was one of the founders of Gush Etzion and Elon Moreh, two vanguard outposts established in the West Bank in the aftermath of the Six-Day War and Yom Kippur War.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Ehud Sprinzak, 'The Iceberg Model of Political Extremism' in David Newman, *The Impact of Gush Emunim, Politics and Settlement in the West Bank*, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁶⁵ A dominant strain within Jewish Messianic thought emphasizes the indispensability of the physical, territorial dimension, although there are occasional tendencies (namely in later Hasidism) to spiritualize the redemptive import of the Land. Cf. Lionel Kochan, 'The Messianic Society: A Jewish Utopia' in Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (ed.), *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, Simon & Schuster, 1988, pp. 1033-37.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 92

¹⁶⁷ Lionel Kochan, 'The Messianic Society: A Jewish Utopia', op. cit., p. 1034.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Gen. 1:9; Jeremiah 3:17.

¹⁷⁰ BT Sanhedrin 99a.

¹⁷¹ The Jewish past enthroned by Religious Zionists as a mythical Golden Age upon which reshape the national-religious revival of the future is based on historical memories of the First Commonwealth (which stood from the 13th century to the 6th century b.c.e.) and the Second Commonwealth (which stood from the 2nd century b.c.e to the 2nd century c.e.).

¹⁷² Lionel Kochan, 'The Messianic Society: A Jewish Utopia', op. cit., p. 1034.

¹⁷³ Cf. Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., p. 307.

¹⁷⁴ Ravitzky observes that, according to both anti- and non-Zionist Haredim, the idea of a Torah-based Jewish commonwealth in pre-Messianic times is considered an oxymoron: 'for in such a state the observance of the Torah would be based on a rebellion against one of its most basic tenets - to quietly await the coming of the Messiah'. Cf. Aviezer Ravitzky, 'Ultra-Orthodoxy and Anti-Zionism', op. cit., Chapter II.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. David Ohana, *Political Theologies in the Holy Land, Israeli Messianism and its Critics*, London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 77-80.

¹⁷⁶ Abraham Isaac Kook's statement 'The Morality of Holiness' is reported in Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, Noam J. Zohar, and Yair Lorberbaum, (ed.), *The Jewish Political Tradition, Volume I: Authority*, New Haven, YUP, 2000, p. 480.

¹⁷⁷ Moshe Hellinger shows how Rabbi Kook constructs a hierarchy of three types of states: an 'inferior state, which is based on fake idealism'; an ordinary Western state, which is based upon a Hobbesian or Lockean rather than a Rousseauian social contract between individuals; and the Jewish state, which is based upon genuine, spiritual idealism. Cf. Moshe Hellinger, 'Political Theology in the Thought of 'Merkaz HaRav' Yeshiva and its Profound Influence on Israeli Politics and Society since 1967', op. cit., pp. 533-550.

¹⁷⁸ Jacob L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy, Political Theory and Practice During the French Revolution and Beyond*, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Moshe Hellinger, 'Political Theology in the Thought of 'Merkaz HaRav' Yeshiva and its Profound Influence on Israeli Politics and Society since 1967', op. cit., pp. 534-39.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Lawrence J Kaplan and David Shatz (Ed.), *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality*, op. cit.

¹⁸² This idea (as expressed in the Muslim confession of faith 'There is no god but God') is regarded by jihadists as proof that Islam rejects all forms of popular sovereignty, democracy, constitutions and parliamentary elections, and that such a rejection is one of the pillars of monotheism.

¹⁸³ Quoted in Mary R. Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror*, New Haven: YUP, 2006, pp. 57-62.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', *Fundamentalisms Observed*, op. cit., p. 319-21

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Aviezer Ratvitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., pp. 89-90; and Dov Schwartz, *Religious Zionism, History and Ideology*, op. cit., p. 38. See also the entry 'Sanhedrin' in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Aviezer Ratvitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 89

¹⁸⁷ As a mythical 'meta-narrative', the Jewish golden age is usually built upon selected and highly idealized themes associated with two privileged foci, the David Kingdom and the Hasmonean rule during the Second Temple period, which represent the pinnacle of the national tradition for both religious and secular Zionism. For an examination of the construction of Israeli national tradition and the reshaping of Jewish memory see especially Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots, Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Chicago: CUP, 1996.

¹⁸⁸ Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., p. 319.

¹⁸⁹ Gush Emunim aims at extending the application of the halakha and Talmudic regulations not only to civic or political matters, but also and foremost to the Israelis' private realms of home, family, and leisure time. Religious injunctions in the Torahcratic Republic would include 'observance of dietary laws, refraining from Sabbath violation, and also business decisions'. The rabbinic authorities would have the right to deliberate even upon 'the selection of one's mate or friends according to the extent of their orthodoxy'. Ibid. p. 307.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, 'The Religious Significance of the State of Israel', op. cit., p. 218.

¹⁹¹ Uriel Tal, 'Foundations of a Political Messianic Trend in Israel', op. cit., point 18.

¹⁹² Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., p. 319.

¹⁹³ Cf. Gideon Aran, *Redemption as a Catastrophe*, op. cit., p. 175.

¹⁹⁴ Gershon Gorember, *The End of Days, Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, op. cit., p. 111. On the mythic-palingenetic import of the war of redemption see also See Harold Fisch, *The Zionist Revolution, A New Perspective*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978, p. 77-78; p. 87.

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in Uri Ram, *The Globalization of Israel, McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem*, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 225.

¹⁹⁶ Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Despair and Deliverance: Private Salvation in Contemporary Israel*, SUNY, 1992.

¹⁹⁷ One of major cultural consequences of the war of redemption was the ideological coalescence between Gush Emunim's theo-political Messianism and the nationalist-revanchist dream of a Jewish militarist rebirth as advocated by the Revisionist Zionism of Vladimir Jabotinsky and the Herut party. Many historians argue that Gush Emunim's rise within Israeli mainstream politics during the Likud era is to a significant extent due to this ideological convergence, especially considering the fact that Begin was a loyal disciple of Jabotinsky. On this subject see especially Colin Shindler's study *The Land Beyond Promise: Israel, Likud and the Zionist Dream*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2001; Hedva Ben Israel, 'Talmon on Nationalism', *History of European Ideas*, n. 34, 2008, pp. 189-196; and Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism, The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration*, London: Routledge, 2007, pp. xv-xvii.

¹⁹⁸ Aran ['Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., pp. 271-78] charges that Gush Emunim's revolutionary drive cannot be ascribed solely to the elements of its theological-ideological nucleus. The investigation of such elements should be complemented by a thorough analysis of the historical transition from Messianic fulfilment to disconfirmation: namely, the contrast between 'the unexpected encounter of young Israelis with the biblical sites of a Fatherland longed for but never actually seen until June 1967' and 'the strategic withdrawal, depression, and ideological vacuum that befell Israeli society in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War'. 'The emergence of these factors, and their encounter with Kookism's belief system caused the eruption of Gush Emunim as a theo-political movement. Apart from Aran's seminal work, other most notable studies addressing Gush Emunim's political mobilization in light of the psycho-social factors related to the '67 - '73 sequence are

Ehud Sprinzak, 'The Iceberg Model of Political Extremism' in David Newman, *The Impact of Gush Emunim, Politics and Settlement in the West Bank*, op. cit., pp. 27- 45; Myron Aronoff, *Religion and Politics (Political Anthropology vol. III)*, New York: Transaction Books, 1984; and Samuel Peleg, *Zealotry and Vengeance, Quest of a Religious Identity Group*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002, p. 52 and p. 85.

¹⁹⁹ See Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., pp. 276-80; and Motti Imbari, 'Fundamentalism in Crisis, The Response of the Gush Emunim Rabbinical Authorities to the Theological Dilemmas Raised by Israel's Disengagement Plan', *Journal of Church and State*, n. 4, 2007, p. 708.

²⁰⁰ Samuel Peleg, *Zealotry and Vengeance*, op. cit., p. 54; and Harold Fisch, *The Zionist Revolution*, op. cit., p. 167.

²⁰¹ Samuel Peleg, *Zealotry and Vengeance*, op. cit., pp. 109-17; and Michael Feige, *Settling in the Hearts*, op. cit., pp. 21-38.

²⁰² Cf. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Despair and deliverance: private salvation in contemporary Israel*, op. cit., pp. 134-48.

²⁰³ Michael Feige, *Settling in the Hearts*, op. cit., p. 26.

²⁰⁴ Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion*, op. cit., p. 36.

²⁰⁵ See Amnon Rubinstein, *The Zionist Dream Revisited: From Herzl to Gush Emunim and Back*, New York: Schocken Books, 1988, pp. 110-17.

²⁰⁶ Quoted in Ehud Sprinzak, 'The Iceberg Model of Political Extremism', op. cit., p. 30. Aran ['Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., p. 290] notes that 'curiously, despite the movement's propaganda efforts, Gush Emunim has never published a binding and systematic program. The closest the movement came to it was an incidentally composed, amateurish position paper, published during Gush Emunim's early days, when it had burst into the public arena in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War. For some reason, the document was only hesitantly released. In any case, it was shelved a short time later. Viewed historically, this document may be considered the movement's articles of establishment (notwithstanding its having been titled "appendix"). This represents the only unequivocal and comprehensive statement of faith in over [thirty] years, and may effectively serve as Gush Emunim's manifesto to this day'.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Myron Aronoff, *Israeli Visions and Divisions, Cultural Change and Political Conflict*, New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1989, pp. 85 -7.

²⁰⁸ Anthony Wallace, 'Revitalization Movements' in Robert Grumet (ed.) *Anthony Wallace, Revitalization and Mazeways, Essays on Culture Change, Volume 1*, Lincoln: UNP, 2003, p. 11

²⁰⁹ Ibid. pp. 15-16.

²¹⁰ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism, The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, op. cit., p. 104.

²¹¹ Cf. Samuel Peleg, *Zealotry and Vengeance*, op. cit., p. 64-65; p. 67 and p. 76.

²¹² Cf. Anthony Wallace, 'Revitalization Movements', op. cit., pp. 10-14; and Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, op. cit., pp. 104-7.

²¹³ Cf. Anthony Wallace, 'Revitalization Movements', op. cit., pp. 17-22.

²¹⁴ According to Wallace [Ibid. p. 13], many and different are the typologies of revitalization movements: Millenarian movements for instance underscore an Apocalyptic world transformation carried out by supernatural intervention; Messianic identity-groups revolve around leaders with charismatic qualities whom the followers consider to have been divinely inspired and/or selected; Nativistic movements are distinguished by strong emphasis on the elimination of alien individuals, customs and values from their idealized polity; etc. Gush Emunim seems to share characteristics of all of the above typologies, which it combines to form its own unique identity.

²¹⁵ 'It is easy to demonstrate that avowedly revival movements are never entirely what they claim to be, for the image of the ancient culture to be revived is distorted by historical ignorance and by the presence of imported and innovative elements. (...) Although almost every revitalization movement embodies in its proposed new cultural system large quantities of both traditional and imported cultural material, for some reason each movement tends to profess either no identification at all, a traditional orientation, or foreign orientation. This suggests that the choice of identification is the solution of a problem of double ambivalence: both the traditional and the foreign model are regarded both positively and negatively. Movements that claim to present an absolutely new conception of culture are obviously blinding themselves to the fact that almost everything in the new system has been modelled after traditional or imported elements or both'. Ibid. p. 17 and p. 24.

²¹⁶ See especially Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed, A Study of Modern Messianic Cults*, London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1963, pp. 201-22; and Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of 'Cargo' Cults in Melanesia*, New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

²¹⁷ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, op. cit., p. 108.

²¹⁸ Cf. Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs McWorld, Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy*, London: Corgi Books, 2001.

²¹⁹ Cf. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, London: Polity, 1990, pp. 21-29.

²²⁰ Cf. Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs McWorld, Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy*, op. cit., pp. xii-xxxv.

²²¹ Uri Ram, *The Globalization of Israel, McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem*, op. cit., p. 6.

²²² Ibid. p. 180-205.

²²³ Ibid. p. 208-234.

²²⁴ On how the fears related to the Arab demographic growth have fed into the xenophobic-racist rhetoric of the secular-religious Israeli Right see especially Ehud Sprinzak, 'Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism, Patterns of Prejudice', *The American Jewish Committee*, Volume 19, Numbers 3 and 4, 1985; and the more recent study of Dani Filc, *The Political Right in Israel, Different Faces of Jewish Populism*, London: Routledge, 2009.

²²⁵ To clarify which of the two principles overrides the other, Israel Shahak quotes a Constitutional Law (that is to say, a law abrogating provisions of other ordinary laws), which was passed by overwhelming majority of Knesset in 1985. By virtue of the 9th amendment to this Basic Law, 'no party whose programme openly opposes the principle of a 'Jewish state', or proposes to change it even by democratic means, is allowed to participate in the election of the Knesset'. Quoted in Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion, The Weight of Three Thousand Years*, London: Pluto Press, 2002, p. 3.

²²⁶ Hellinger reports that in Religious Zionist lexicon, and, more recently, even in that quota of Haredi Jews which once stood against the Israeli state and its policies, the struggle for Eretz Ysrael is bound up with the struggle against the impurity and laxity associated with the alien vales of the Western culture - the new Hellenizing influences of rationalism, neo-liberalism, and democratic pluralism. Cf. Moshe Helliger, 'Political Theology in the Thought of 'Merkaz Harav' Yeshiva and its Profound Influence on Israeli Politics and Society since 1967', op. cit., pp. 445-46.

²²⁷ Ram's study [*The Globalization of Israel*, op. cit., p. 109] reports that 'since the 1990s the stronger socio-economic classes tend to support the centre-left-wing block, that is, the Labour-led coalition with its globalization and 'peace process' agenda, whereas the lower socioeconomic classes tend to support the right-wing and religious block, that is, the Likud-led coalition and its localization and conflict agenda. They were of course mobilized politically by the ideologically nationalistic elites, both religious and secular. In the political system the main conduits of mobilizing this support were the Likud Party, the National Religious Party (Mafdal), the Shas Party, and the other satellite parties of the right-wing and religious block. In cultural terms, the idiom of mobilization against the upper classes' secular, global cosmopolitanism was the cultivation of a quasi-religious, lower-class, local return to Judaism. What was labelled in 1996 as the 'Netanyahu Coalition' epitomized this combination of populist anti-elitism and popular Jewish traditionalism. It included minorities such as Mizrachim, Orthodox Jews, settlers, and secular national extremists and excluded (rhetorically) the secular, urban, upper- middle classes (Ashkenzim) and practically all Israeli Arab Palestinians'. On this regard see also Dani Filc, *The Political Right in Israel*, op. cit., pp. 55-78.

²²⁸ Uri Ram, *The Globalization of Israel*, op. cit., p. 4.

²²⁹ See Michael Fiege, *Settling in the Hearts*, op. cit., p. 272. Hellinger underscores how according to Rabbi Kook the son the Israeli state remains a democracy based on the religious ideal of 'seguliyut' (a Jewish ethno-religious 'specificity', 'uniqueness' and 'exclusiveness'): 'in Israel the principles of the sovereignty of the people and the rule of the majority should apply in public issues only to the Jewish population'. Cf. Moshe Helliger, 'Political Theology in the Thought of 'Merkaz Harav' Yeshiva and its Profound Influence on Israeli Politics and Society since 1967', op. cit., pp. 541-2.

²³⁰ Cf. Michael Fiege, *Settling in the Hearts*, op. cit., p. 6: and pp. 65-66. On a similar note, Peleg [*Zealotry and Vengeance*, op. cit., p. 40 and p. 82] observes that Gush Emunim's revolution resists the assault Western Modernity mounts against the basic religious values of Jewish Orthodoxy by relying on technologically advanced means of communication such as Internet, and the highly efficient organizational resources of a modern state.

²³¹ Cf. John Gray, *Al Qaeda and What It Means to be Modern*, op. cit., p. 26 and p. 76.

²³² See Roger Griffin's lecture notes, 'The Way of the Terrorist: Reflections on Terrorism's Relationship to Modernity', Central European University, Department of History, Budapest, 15 October 2010.

²³³ This is a main point that Griffin [*Modernism and Fascism*, op. cit., p. 107 and note 30 p. 391] raises against David Bromely's assumption that 'Apocalypticism would create structural liminality' ['Constructing Apocalypticism, Social and Cultural Elements of Radical Organization', op. cit., p. 33]. According to Griffin, confusing an adaptive response for a trigger factor would equal to 'putting the cart before the horse'.

²³⁴ See Myron Aronoff, *Israeli Visions and Divisions, Cultural Change and Political Conflict*, op. cit., p. 87.

²³⁵ See especially Emilio Gentile, *History of the Fascist Party, 1919-21, Movement and Militia*, Bari: Laterza, 1989 [in Italian].

²³⁶ From an Anthropological angle, Wallace ['Revitalization Movements', op. cit., p. 25] argues that 'no revitalization movement can, by definition, be truly non-secular, but some can be relatively less religious than others, and movements can change in emphasis depending on changing circumstances. There is a tendency, which is implicit in the earlier discussion of stages, for movements to become more political in emphasis, and to act through secular rather than religious institutions, as problems of organization, adaptation, and routinisation become more pressing'.

²³⁷ Cf. Samuel Peleg, *Zealotry and Vengeance*, op. cit., p. 110; p. 114; and p. 117.

²³⁸ Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)', op. cit., pp. 280-1. Aran charges that Gush Emunim's cooptation within the Israeli state infrastructure was to a large extent confirmed by the fact that 'some of the former leadership figures found formal roles within newly formed local governments, and local leaders began to assume leadership roles in the movement'. Ibid. p. 281.

²³⁹ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., 81.

²⁴⁰ In this sense, Martin Seliger [*Ideology and Politics*, New York: Free Press, 1976, p. 120] charges that the tendency towards compromise inherent to political praxis 'causes ideology to bifurcate into the purer, and hence more dogmatic, fundamental dimension of argumentation and the more diluted, and hence more pragmatic, operative dimension'. Peleg [*Zealotry and Vengeance*, op. cit., pp. 70-71] provides bibliographical references of those key Political Sciences studies which identify 'dogmatism and pragmatism' as the two paradigmatic styles of political participation, leadership and authority. Both styles, argues Peleg, might coexist in the same revitalisation movement but 'at different stages of its development'. In the preliminary phase, 'the fanatics sustain the zeal and vigour of the challenge to the [established] authorities'. Once the initial confrontation subsides, the 'administrators', who are normally more 'germane to the practical manner of decision making and compromise', often negotiate opportunities for political change. At some point, however, the dogmatic fringe is likely to split because it does not envisage 'ground for bargaining, nor any incentive to assuagement'. The political arena might therefore be reopened to confrontation, radicalism or violence.

²⁴¹ On the 'theological shock' engulfing Gush Emunim as a result of the Camp David Accords see especially Michael Fiege, *Settling in the Hearts*, op. cit., pp. 196-211; Gershom Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977*, New York: Times Books, 2006, pp. 319-21; and Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar, *Lords of the Land: The War for Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-2007*, New York: Nation Books, 2007, pp. 71-75.

²⁴² Motti Imbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount*, op. cit., pp. 51-53.

²⁴³ See Moshe Hellinger, 'Political Theology in the Thought of 'Merkaz HaRav' Yeshiva and its Profound Influence on Israeli Politics and Society since 1967', op. cit., p. 445.

²⁴⁴ Janet Aviad, 'The Contemporary Israeli Pursuit of the Millennium', *Religion*, Academic Press, Volume 14, 1984.

²⁴⁵ On Yehuda Etzion's theocratic post-Zionism and its relation to mainstream Religious Zionism see especially Motti Imbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount*, op. cit., pp. 51-77; Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, Oxford: OUP, 1991, pp. 94-99, pp. 252-61; and by the same author *Brother Against Brother, Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to Rabin Assassination*, New York: Free Press, 1999, pp. 155-65.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Ehud Sprinzak, *Against Brother, Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to Rabin Assassination*, op. cit., p. 257.

²⁴⁷ See Motti Imbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount*, op. cit., pp. 51-55; and Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar, *Lords of the Land: The War for Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-2007*, p. 81-87.

²⁴⁸ Ehud Sprinzak, *Brother Against Brother, Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to Rabin Assassination*, op. cit., p. 253.

²⁴⁹ Cf. Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel', op. cit., pp. 267-68.

²⁵⁰ See *ivi* section 1.9 and section 3.11.

²⁵¹ Gideon Aran underscored the organic connection between centre and periphery of the Holy land in an interview for *Religioscope*. Cf. Jean-Marc Flükiger, 'Jewish Messianism and the Settler Movement after Gaza Withdrawal - Interview with Gideon Aran', *Religioscope*, 26 November 2005.

²⁵² Quoted in Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days, Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, op. cit., p. 234

²⁵³ On the Eschatological import of the Temple Mount for Sunni Islam, apart from Gorenberg's already mentioned study, see especially David Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic*

Literature, op. cit., p. 22; p. 44; pp. 113-16; and Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*, Berkeley: UCP, 2010, p. 100.

²⁵⁴ Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days, Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, op. cit., p. 56, p. 59 and p. 70.

²⁵⁵ An historical account of the Israeli secular authorities' and Jewish Orthodoxy's conjoint 'handling' of the Temple Mount in the aftermath of the June 1967 war is offered by Ron E. Hassner's excellent study *War on Sacred Grounds*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010, pp. 114-33.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Ibid. pp. 123-29.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Motti Imbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount*, op. cit., pp. 68-9.

²⁵⁸ Quoted in Ehud Sprinzak, *Brother Against Brother, Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to Rabin Assassination*, op. cit., p. 158.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 164-65.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, op. cit., pp. 256-59.

²⁶¹ Cf. Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days, Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, op. cit., p. 136.

²⁶² Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel', op. cit., pp. 267-8.

²⁶³ Consistent with the spirit of the earliest Apocalypticism, both Haredi Judaism and theocratic post-Zionism are inherently pessimistic and anti-historical. There is no point in any earthly gradualist commitment, let alone in association with the Zionist state, as the present deficiency can only be eliminated by a radical change. The sudden dissolution of the hitherto world order will grant fulfilment to Jewish existence all at once. In both cases, the utopian ideal of the Messianic Age to come stands at the sharpest contrast with the present era, and also commands its abolition. In light of the fully-fledged ideal, history has no meaning and therefore must be eliminated. The pessimism is however only apparent as the starker the contrast between the reality and ideal, closer is the Messiah. In both positions, the impression that the lowest ebb has been reached motivates the expectation that the radical shift towards transcendental fulfilment is at hand.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days, Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, op. cit., pp. 117-18; and Motti Imbari, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount*, op. cit., pp. 135.

²⁶⁵ For a theological treatment of Zealotry within Judaism see Menachem Friedman, 'Religious Zealotry in Israeli Society' in S. Pool and E. Klausz (ed.), *On Ethnic and Religious Diversity in Israel*, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1975, pp. 91-112.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ On Etzion's failure in obtaining Rabbinic approval and its repercussion on the overall Jewish Underground's terroristic plot see Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, op. cit., p. 258; and Jean-Marc Flükiger, 'Jewish Messianism and the Settler Movement after Gaza Withdrawal - Interview with Gideon Aran', op. cit.

²⁶⁸ On the Hilltop Youth phenomenon and its relationship to mainstream Gush Emunim see Michael Fiege, *Settling in the Hearts*, op. cit., pp. 229-46.

²⁶⁹ On the price tag policy see especially the ICG's report 'Israel's Religious Right and the Question of the Settlements', op. cit., p. 29, note 283.

²⁷⁰ This is the major conclusive assumption of Imbari's study *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount*, op. cit., pp. 161-67.

Chapter VI: US Christian Zionism

US Christian Zionism represents the most obscure and least explored amid the various constituencies that animated the project of a 'New American Empire' during the President Bush era. It may be characterized as a modern Millenarian movement stemming from American Conservative Evangelicalism, which advocates that the restoration of Diaspora Jews to Palestine is a necessary step in an End Time scenario in which Christ returns to rule the world for a thousand years before the final judgment, and that He will do so from a theocratic Kingdom centred on Jerusalem.¹

In a co-written study which stirred endless polemics, political scientists John J. Mearcheimer and Stephen M. Walt submitted that US Evangelical Zionism represents the Christian 'significant adjunct' to the 'Israel lobby': a loose but powerful interest group composed by both Jews and Gentiles, whose 'acknowledged purpose is to press Israel's case within the United States and influence American foreign policy in ways that its members believe will benefit the Jewish state'. This lobby would pressurize Washington leaders to treat Israel 'as if it were the fifty-first state of the Confederation'.² Although the authors refrain from defining the Israel lobby as a cabal or a conspiracy, they nonetheless recognize in its political prominence, remit and dedication the underlying cause for America's unwavering and unconditional support to the Zionist State in the past forty years:

Since the Six-Day War, a salient feature – and arguably the central focus – of America's Middle East policy has been its relationship with Israel. For the past four decades, in fact, the United States has provided Israel with a level of material and diplomatic support that dwarfs what it provided to other countries. That aid is largely unconditional: no matter what Israel does, the level of support remains for the most part unchanged. In particular, the United States consistently favours Israel over the Palestinians and rarely puts pressure on the Jewish state to stop building settlements and roads in the West Bank. (...) Even when American presidents put pressure on Israel to make concession or try distance the United States from Israel's policies – as President George W. Bush has attempted to do in several occasions since September 11 – the lobby intervenes and bring them into line.³

Pastor Stephen Sizer, today one of Christian Zionism's most vociferous critics, charges that Evangelical organizations and individuals inspired by this Millenarian faith comprise 'what is probably the most powerful lobby in the US, influencing not only American foreign policy but also the chances of a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict'. To Sizer, conservative Evangelicals adhering to this End Time creed would be even more dedicated than the majority of Jewish interest groups in providing political, financial and moral

support to the modern State of Israel. Further, US Christian Zionists would vote disproportionately for the Republican Party and maintain significant links with the neo-conservative elites. Until the last presidential election in November 2008, the pastor adds, there were no doubt several prominent born-again Christians inside the White House (including George W. Bush himself) who embraced, or at least sympathized with, this particular Millenarian orientation.⁴

On a more cautionary note, Mearsheimer and Walt, along with many other experts, maintain that the Evangelical Right's weight within the Israel lobby should not be overstated, nor its overall influence on the White House. Especially when compared to established Jewish pressure groups like AIPAC, ADL, or ZOA, Christian Zionist lobbies still lack 'the organizational capacity to analyse national security topics or to offer specific legislative guidance on concrete foreign policy issues'.⁵ For these reasons alone, Evangelical Zionism should be seen as a 'junior partner' to the Israel lobby, and not as its driving force - which according to the majority of commentators would indisputably stem from the Jewish neo-conservative core.⁶ Same considerations might apply to Christian Zionism's demographic strength in the US. Quite tellingly, supporters as well as detractors equally overinflate the number of Christian Millenarian supporters of Israel to at least 50 million. More accurate and reliable estimates assess the current proportion of Christian Zionists to compose 20-25% of the 85-90 million of American Evangelicals (this means they amass about 6.4% of the overall United States population which today stands at 310 million).⁷

As John Hubers reminds us, not buying into the figures Christian Zionist leaders boast in order 'to puff their sense of self-importance' is essential to avoid the recurrent misconception that all American Evangelicals are on board with the extremist End Time views underpinning such a theo-political movement.⁸ Despite representing the largest, fastest growing and most politically active component of US religious life, Evangelicalism⁹ is far from being a monolithic entity. It should be rather understood as a 'galaxy in perpetual motion', formed by groups, denominations and churches which, whilst sharing common cultural traits and doctrinal dogmas, remain nevertheless divided or in controversy over many other key theological issues. Defining a religious belonging whilst discriminating within its multiple facets is never an easy task to accomplish. This appears particularly to be the case in regards to the religious background of our case study:

[All American] Evangelicals are so individualistic and diverse that it is hard even to identify and count them, much less to define their theology or measure their political convictions definitively. There is no agreement about how many Evangelicals there are in America, in part because there is no single comprehensive definition of who they are or what they believe. One should not think of Evangelicalism as a single vessel majestically transporting a unified community of believers to political domination, social redemption, and eternal salvation. Rather, it is like a vast fleet of rowboats and boogie boards, each bearing an individual in search of an authentic personal experience with God.¹⁰

In keeping with the taxonomic guidelines provided by John Green - a prominent demographer and expert of the impact of religion on American public life, US Christian Zionism would be embedded in the subculture of a conservative type of Evangelicalism, often identified as 'Fundamentalism'.¹¹ As we shall see, the latter consists in a by-product of the countercultural movement against those paganising tendencies emerging in nineteenth and early twentieth century America. For our purposes here it is essential to stress that this anti-Modernist reaction propounds, as its normative-doctrinal bases, the principle of perfect Biblical inerrancy paired with premillennial Dispensationalist Eschatology. The latter consists in a kind of Apocalypticism fastening on the utopian hope that the founding of the Zionist state and the Jewish ingathering in Eretz Yisrael signals the imminent irruption of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The fate of modern Israel is nonetheless a defining theological issue not exclusively for this conservative sector of the Evangelical population. As Timothy Weber points out, 'although only a third of American Evangelicals might identify with Dispensational worldviews, an awful lot of other Evangelicals who are Bible believers, who have a very warm spot in their heart for Israel. Let's face it. Evangelicals grew up with maps of Israel on their Sunday school wall!'¹² In the final section of this chapter, we put forward the hypothesis that, as a result of the 9/11 aftershock, an Israel-centred kind of Millenarian faith acquired momentum not only within the Dispensationalist circles, but also in US Evangelicalism at large.

Even though it seems impossible to ascertain Christian Zionism's exact dimension (either nationally or within the US Evangelical spectrum) and the extent of its influence on Washington's decision making, it remains nonetheless necessary to study this phenomenon as it represents, along with Israeli Religious Zionism, another indicative example about how Eschatological beliefs impact on political reality, both on a domestic and international scale. For these conservative Evangelicals, 'politics and Biblical based faith are inseparable: not only do current events in the Middle East confirm the Word of God, but also

reiterate Biblical events'.¹³ The injunctions and promises concerning the ancient tribes of Israel are therefore applied to the contemporary Zionist state. In light of an unconditional reading of the Covenantal promise, Israel is legitimately entitled to expand its national borders to meet those defining 'Eretz Ysrael', as recounted in Genesis 15:18. Similar to Gush Emunim, US Christian Zionism advocates, on sacred grounds, an Israeli annexation far beyond the currently occupied territories. God Himself would call for a Jewish dominion over all the 'Promised Land', which includes the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights as well as large parts of present-day Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan.¹⁴ A Jewish possession of these territorial assets is seen as indispensable to prepare the way for the Second Coming of Jesus, and the establishment of His Millenarian rule. Any diplomatic negotiation towards a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is therefore not 'Biblically sound', in that it would hamper God's geo-political plan for the Middle East. As Israel is 'the only nation the Almighty ever established', the Palestinians can make no claim whatsoever to its Land.¹⁵ Considering the political visibility US Evangelical Zionism acquired during the eight years of the past Republican Administration, Al Qaeda's ambition for the establishment of a worldwide Islamic Caliphate was directly mirrored by the utopian desire for a Jewish maximalist colonisation of the Middle East.

Some not apologetic and reliable commentators explain the Evangelical 'bedrock support' for modern Israel beyond or away from End Time theology. In a balanced, nuanced, and thoroughly researched study, author Stephen Spector unveils a 'complex set of motivations' behind the Evangelical love for the Zionist cause. This includes guilt and contrition for Christianity's past collusion with anti-Semitism. With their unconditional love for Israel, US Evangelicals cast themselves as those 'righteous Christians' making amend for the sins of their European co-religionists who let the Holocaust happen. Evangelicals are also grateful to the Chosen for having laid the religious foundation of their faith. Without them, they would have neither the Bible nor a rabbi named 'Jesus'. Further, in view of the divine promise to Abraham contained in Genesis 12 ['I will bless those that bless you and will curse those that curse you'], Evangelicals are deeply concerned to be judged by God according to how they behaved towards His people.¹⁶ Accounting for the affiliation between the Bible Belt and Israel on not too dissimilar grounds, diplomatic expert Aaron David Miller downplays the End Time theology's bearing in favour of a shared Western civilization inspired by the 'good values'

of democracy and freedom, which today Israel and America would embody and defend against the mounting tide of radical Islam - in particular Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah.¹⁷ Analogous views seem to be unanimously held by all those Jewish interest groups that accept or even nurture the Evangelical support for the Zionist cause. George W. Mamo, the vice president and spokesman of International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ), discredits the idea that US Evangelicals support Israel in order to help summon the Second Coming. Mamo substantiates his claim with the results of an opinion poll:

We are told that the [Evangelical] Right supports Israel to hasten the return of Jesus and the onset of Armageddon – yet the Tarrance survey data show that only one in three Evangelicals supports Israel because is the place prophesized for the Second Coming of Jesus. What is the most often cited reason Christians support Israel? Forty-three percent said they support Israel because of Israel's democratic values and its role as our strong and reliable ally in the war against terrorism. In other words, four in ten self-identified Evangelicals support because of our shared democratic values and the common enemy that is targeting America and Western values along with Israel.¹⁸

The analytical perspective embraced here is quite different. However important these non-Eschatological drives might be, in order to unveil the underlying motives at the basis of the political, financial and moral support this mass Evangelical constituency offers to the Zionist enterprise, it is necessary to pay close attention to its Millenarian underpinning. US Christian Zionists are 'prophecy believers' scrutinizing the horizon of historical occurrences through the lens of an End Time 'jigsaw', which has been idiosyncratically assembled from selected Apocalyptic passages disseminated in the Old and New Testament.¹⁹ We shall see that, once interpreted from a literal-inerrant hermeneutical standpoint, these key passages are seen as no less than 'pre-written history', containing a detailed and discernable timetable for the end of the present dispensation and the beginning of a no longer perfectible age of bliss and harmony.

During a visit to Jordan, Israel and Palestine he made in February 2010, the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams was reported as saying that Christian Zionism's theology represents a 'recent Protestant addition' devoid of any substantial 'Biblical base'. According to the Archbishop, the belief by some US conservative Evangelicals that the foundation and the territorial expansion of the Israeli state is a prerequisite for the return of Christ appeared as a consequence of some prophecy-driven speculations taking place only in the nineteenth century.²⁰ Notwithstanding Williams' remarks about its recent vintage, it seems undeniable that, as belief system, Christian Zionism shows

profound affinity and continuity with long-established ideals and tropes inscribed in Western Apocalyptic tradition. Beyond the caricatures of ‘mentally unhinged’ Fundamentalists ushering in the end of the world, stands a complex set of convictions and practices soothing present-day spiritual needs and existential anxieties. When one confronts a Millenarian creed that today gathers millions of believers and also impinges on key geo-political realities such as the Middle East peace processes, simplistic stereotype and sensationalist exposés should be abandoned in favour of a serious and critical engagement with the sources of such a consensus. The main purpose of this chapter is therefore to repeat the exercise done for the previous one. We will attempt to define US Christian Zionism theologically, in order to tease out and unpack the core motives from which its earthly involvement stems. We shall argue that in order to understand the Evangelical dedication to the Zionist cause, one should never dissociate God’s special relationship with his Chosen from the Eschatological calculations about the catastrophic irruption of a final and ultimate age of perfection and harmony. The promises made to Abraham and his descendants in Genesis and the visions of the End summoned by John’s Apocalypse are the two pillars upon which premillennial Dispensationalism rests, however the former are subordinated to the latter. Our underlying assumption is that if the opposite was true, most of the Dispensationalist appeal over US Evangelicals would wither away.

6.1 Dispensationalism

US Christian Zionism is embedded in a theological framework known as premillennial Dispensationalism, by far the most influential Apocalyptic belief system in contemporary America. As already explained, premillennialism is a shorthand for a catastrophic understanding of the Christian redemptive process holding that Jesus Christ’s return in glory will precede and actually inaugurate the thousand-year period of peace, bliss, and holiness.²¹ Dispensationalism is one of the multiple variations of the premillennial template, developed during the nineteenth century by the Anglo-Irish Evangelist John Nelson Darby, a member of the Plymouth Brethren sect in Dublin. As his charismatic authority was waning in Britain, Darby decided to undertake several ‘preaching tours’ in North America, in which he met and influenced such prominent Evangelical leaders such as Dwight L. Moody and William Blackstone. Darby soon became a leading figure in the Bible and Prophecy Conference movement, a theological

circle that, between 1875 and 1920, would set the doctrinal tone for the emerging Fundamentalist movement in North America.²² Dispensationalism could not have attained its mass popularity in the US without the mediation of Cyrus E. Scofield, a Kansas theologian, minister and attorney fascinated by Darby's speculations about the Jews' prophetic role. In 1909, Scofield published through the Oxford University Press an annotated Bible with the intent of helping readers to understand the Old and New Testamentarian prophecies from a Dispensationalist angle. In the following years, his book was sold by the millions, elevating Scofield to the status of 'ultimate authority, the final court of Biblical hermeneutics'. Today, many Evangelical Zionists regard the Scofield Reference Bible not as a commentary informed by Darby's futurist Eschatology, but as the Christian canon itself.²³

Dispensationalism does not represent a mere derivation from premillennial Eschatology, but an all-encompassing belief system, which blends together 'a Biblical hermeneutics, a philosophy of history, and a fairly comprehensive systematic theology'.²⁴ For our purpose here, the crux of Darby's intricate doctrine is recapitulated as follows. The entire sacred history, beginning with creation and ending with Christ's Millennial Kingdom, unfolds according to a pre-ordained plan, which is divided chronologically by seven epochs, or 'dispensations' from which such a belief system is named.²⁵ In each and every one of these dispensations, God offers to a fallen humanity what Scofield calls a 'new means of grace': a chance to redeem itself and in so doing advance the overall process of salvation.²⁶ Humanity inevitably fails to live in obedience to the test, God consequently executes His judgement, and a new dispensation begins.²⁷ By establishing a set of binding Covenants with them, God originally appoints the Jews as 'chosen agents' of such a redemptive process. But, throughout its long history Israel falls repeatedly short of fulfilling its agreement with God. On account of their unfaithfulness and disobedience, punishment is visited upon the Israelites in the form of foreign oppression, loss of national independence, and exilic subjugation. The real turning point in Darby's sacred chronology takes place 483 years after the end of the Babylonian captivity and the Jewish second restoration to Israel. God sends His Son to save Israel from the Roman domination, and re-establish the House of David as everlasting monarchy, but the Pharisees (the forefathers of Rabbinic Judaism) rejected Christ as their Messiah, allowing the Roman authorities to crucify Him. As a result of this shortcoming, the cosmic plan of salvation centred on Israel is completely subverted: God suspends the prophetic timetable, chastises the Jews

with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and a new exile, and temporally transfers His attention to the just formed Christian Church. Now, in the sixth dispensation preceding the Millennium, the chance of redemption comes only to 'those who accept Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as their personal saviour'. This reshuffle does not however entail the Christian supersession of Israel. God's promise to Abraham (as recounted in Genesis 15-17) remains unconditional and eternal, and the Age of the Church represents a sheer historical 'parenthesis', which will expire with the Jewish ultimate restoration to the Holy Land. In keeping with Darby's intricate script, the ingathering of the exiles and the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine would instantiate that Eschatological chain reaction leading directly to the return of Jesus, and His ensuing 1000-year reign.²⁸ In other words, for King Jesus to rule the world from David's throne in Jerusalem, it is necessary that the Jewish People fulfil their part of the Covenant with God. From this End Time scenario it follows that the Christian salvation rests entirely upon the fate of the Jewish people and their return to the Land of Inheritance. Everything on the Christian Zionist mind rides on the Jews.²⁹

6.2 The Cult of the Text

In view of the distinctive emphasis Martin Luther placed on 'sola scriptura', the cult of the sacred text has always been to some significant extent implicit in Reformed Christianity. As Carl G. Jung put it, having pulled down many normative frameworks, liturgies and rituals that Roman Catholicism had erected over the centuries, Protestantism was immediately confronted with the 'schismatic and disintegrating effect of individual revelation'. Once 'left to God alone', and without the protection or guidance of traditional dogmas, believers were thus obliged to intensify the authority of the Bible as a substitute for 'the lost authority of the Church'. That the truths of Christian faith and practice can and must be deduced from the scripture alone, added Jung, entails 'a chance of immediate spiritual experience with God', but also 'a great risk'.³⁰

The espousal of a literal system of Biblical interpretation is often recognized as the doctrinal hallmark of Darby's doctrine. Scofield charged that premillennial Dispensationalism was the result of 'consistent application of the basic hermeneutical principle of literal, normal, or plain interpretation. No other system of theology can claim this. The non-literalist is the non-Dispensationalist, [whereas] the consistent literalist is a Dispensationalist'.³¹

Similar to the adherents of other Fundamentalist viewpoints, past and present Dispensationalist expositors reject any allegorical or mythological meaning bestowed on the sacred text they revere. The latter must be taken consistently at its 'face value', that is, by giving to every word 'the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking'.³²

As a self-standing interpretative principle, however, literalism may not be methodologically sound, first of all in view of that 'absurd lack of proportion between the claims that are religiously important to Fundamentalists and the arguments about the sacred scriptures by which they seek to guarantee the veracity of those claims'.³³ Further, that the Old and New Testaments are fraught with countless contradictions, anomalies, and overlapping 'doublets' would render it impossible to enshrine a coherent meaning of the Word of God on literal grounds alone. In this sense, Biblical scholar James Barr submits that the dependable and guiding principle to all conservative Evangelical hermeneutics, the one that overrides all other principles whilst dictating the overarching approach to the Bible, is inerrancy rather than literalism. What really matters is that, in view of its divine authorship, the Bible contains only 'axiomatic and fundamental truths', both theologically and in historical, geographical, chronological or scientific terms. No actual instances of error can be contemplated because even the smallest of them might put at risk the inspiration and authority of the whole:

Even if Fundamentalists sometimes say that they take the Bible literally, the facts of their interpretation show that this is not so. What Fundamentalists insist on is not that the Bible must be taken literally but that it must be so interpreted as to avoid any admission that it contains any kind of error. In order to avoid imputing errors to the Bible, Fundamentalists twist and turn back and forward between literal and non-literal interpretation. (...) What they mean is that the Bible is error-free.³⁴

Commenting on Barr's ideas, Malise Ruthven charges that by means of the doctrine of inerrancy, Fundamentalists are able to 'iron out' those textual anomalies or inconsistencies which readily arise from the application of literal hermeneutics. Whenever their scriptural interpretations are contradicted by historical evidence or established knowledge, Fundamentalists avoid embarrassment and resist criticism by the hand of more progressive theologians, by shifting the ground away from literalism and towards inerrancy. Here, 'the burden of proof' is entirely transposed from God to man. Once the Bible is taken as God's infallible statement, it follows that its discrepancies must be explained as shortcomings in human understanding, and

not as flaws inherent into the text itself. Moving back and forth between literalism and inerrancy affords all Fundamentalists to endow their idiosyncratic readings of the Bible with a patina of almost scientific authenticity.³⁵ In conservative Evangelical circles, this hermeneutical criterion is frequently endorsed as the 'fighting word' against the outer and unfaithful world, but also functions as a 'litmus test' for in-group belonging: as such, it may be deployed as a 'loyalty oath' for membership in Evangelical congregations or it may feature in the statutes of various church organizations.³⁶

Literalism finessed by inerrancy is essential to premillennial Dispensationalists as it provides the basis for satisfying their obsessive interest in 'understanding the times' for the sake of setting forth that chain of events leading towards the final Millenarian transfiguration. The impetus for decoding the 'chronology of the End' out of selected Biblical passages is a longstanding Millenarian rationale, which continues today in that popular variety of 'fictionalized' Dispensationalism represented by *The Late Great Planet Earth* or *Left Behind Series*. Within those circles it is commonly held that, if properly interpreted, the sacred text can unveil 'a detailed road map of events that will soon unfold as human history enters in its final stage'.³⁷

A rekindled commitment to the authority of Bible - along with the conviction that its prophecies are pre-written history - is often seen by historians as being part of that anti-modernist crusade that US Conservative Evangelicalism waged against Darwin's Evolutionist theories between the late 19th and the early 20th century. Under this light, the embrace of literal-inerrant hermeneutics would primarily represent a countercultural reaction to the allegorizing and spiritualizing exegeses imbuing Higher Criticism.³⁸ This method of progressive Biblical interpretation firstly emerged in the wake of the shift in epistemological paradigms engendered by the European Enlightenment, to acquire later, at the end of the 18th century, its fully-fledged status within the area of German liberal Protestantism. Higher Criticism reads the sacred scriptures through the lens of human history, rather than reading the latter through prism of the former as Dispensationalism sets out to do.³⁹ The sacred text is to be investigated 'rationally' as a bare cultural document like any other - that is, without any doctrinal restriction and by utilizing all the linguistic, archaeological and historical data available. This method posits that, consisting of distinct strata added and edited over time, the Bible is to be studied 'diachronically', through a detailed analysis of the various socio-historical contexts in which it was written.⁴⁰ On similar grounds, its Apocalyptic-prophetic contents should be

revaluated either as 'inspirational poetry' crafted to sustain persecuted communities or in guise of *vaticinia ex eventu* (prophecies of the past) - retrospective interpretations of already occurred events, which are recast in the guise of future predictions in order to legitimize a known outcome.⁴¹

Needless to say, the supposedly value-free and scientifically objective methods of Higher Criticism represented a frontal attack at the core of US Evangelicalism's identity, beliefs and values. In order to secure the basic assumptions of their worldview from the encroachment of Modernity and its degenerative ideas, a coterie of determined Evangelical clergy and laity launched in 1875 the Niagara Bible Conference. This summer resort theological symposium taking place annually set the precedent for countless other Bible conferences throughout North America. By 1878, the countercultural revivalist movement had unanimously identified fourteen 'Fundamentals', amongst which Darby's Eschatological system was officially included as the doctrinal tenet of most recent vintage. A 'sectarian novelty' such as premillennial Dispensationalism was thus enshrined as 'fundamental' to Evangelical orthodoxy as Christ's incarnation, the virgin birth, the working power of miracles, resurrection, etc.⁴² Gary Dorrien maintains that in view of the remarkable success of the Scofield Reference Bible, whose publication coincided with the heyday of the revivalist movement, Darby's doctrine became 'grafted' onto Evangelical Orthodoxy. Dorrien recognizes this last development as crucially responsible for a steep decline in critical Biblical literacy within American churches:

Instead of reading scripture inductively in its historical and canonical contexts, Dispensationalists fixed on a few Apocalyptic texts ripped out of context and applied literally to the future. In the name of recovering fundamental full-gospel Christianity, they promoted bad exegesis and displaced the Biblical doctrine of salvation with a bizarre schematism only remotely derived from the scripture.⁴³

In analogous terms, historian Ernest R. Sandeen charges that espousing the word of God through its plain semantic meaning, recurring to doctrinal inerrancy whenever such a plain meaning conflicts with reality, and reading current affairs through the lens of a highly periodized, deterministic and pessimistic Eschatology became the theological bedrock of the nascent Fundamentalist culture.⁴⁴ Today, Christian Zionism represents the most politically salient offspring of that culture.

Dispensational hermeneutics acquired authoritative ground within US Evangelical circles after key prophetic claims Darby made about the Jews'

restoration to the Land and the foundation of a Jewish national home in Palestine appeared to have been miraculously fulfilled by the early successes of the Zionist movement. Not only did these historical accomplishments validate the standing of the Bible as divinely revealed truth, but also bestowed credibility on other not yet fulfilled predictions announcing that imminent global catastrophe ushering in the Second Coming of Jesus and His Millenarian rule centred in Jerusalem.⁴⁵ We shall see how such a mutual reinforcement between End Time expectations and historical occurrences concerning modern Israel feeds into the political mobilization of Christian Zionism.

The strength of Darby's belief system stems from a 'self-contained doctrinal package allowing no additions or subtractions'.⁴⁶ This package is nothing but a compound of heterogeneous and often-unrelated passages drawn selectively from Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation or other Apocalyptic verses scattered in the Old and New Testament. Dispensationalists deploy such a 'jigsaw puzzle' as an interpretative prism, to put past and present historical events into meaningful relation with each other and, in so doing, to cast light on how the future will unfold. More progressive voices within American Evangelicalism and Judaism tend to epitomize Darby's doctrine as a highly confected theology, derived from a 'pick and choose hermeneutics' and without any authoritative Biblical grounding. Endorsing arguments that evoke the basics of Higher Criticism, New Testament scholar Barbara Rossing argues that Dispensationalism assembles with utter impunity 'bits and pieces of Christian canon written many centuries apart and under very different socio-historical circumstances into an overarching End Time formula'.⁴⁷ On a similar wavelength, Rabbi Michael J. Cook, an expert on Jewish-Christian relations, accuses Darby's doctrine of intermingling 'biblical materials from hither and yon that bear no intrinsic relation to one another, and that even individually are not understood correctly – all to construct an elaborately bizarre theological system reliant on no solid foundation whatsoever'.⁴⁸ Craig Hill, another liberal Evangelical theologian lined up against Christian Zionist distortions, charges that 'ironically, in their effort to interpret the Bible literally and consistently, proponents of Dispensational theology have mangled the Biblical witness almost beyond recognition. It is the Bible itself, this wonderfully diverse and complex witness to God and Christ, that has been "left behind"'.⁴⁹

Criticism notwithstanding, over its one-hundred-year existence Darby's 'hotchpotch' has proved itself as remarkably flexible and adaptable. Its acolytes, observes O'Leary, are prone to distort the import of historical occurrences in

order to fit the prophecy, and, in case this operation is not pursuable, they are equally capable of twisting the prophecy in order to accommodate reality:

like the hypochondriac poring over a medical textbook who constantly finds his own ailments mirrored in the symptoms of every rare disease, [Dispensationalist] interpreter who searches the world around him for Apocalyptic signs of the times is likely to find that for which he seeks.⁵⁰

That the appeal of its predictions withstood several disconfirmations further confirms Dispensationalism as an enduring and powerful Millenarian creed, particularly capable of granting believers unity of meaning and reassurance in times of trial and tribulation.

6.3 Dual Covenant

At the heart of Darby's doctrine stands the idea of 'an almost apartheid-like separation' between Israel and the Church.⁵¹ God has two distinct but parallel means of working towards eternity, one through the heirs of the Jewish tribes He originally appointed as His Chosen, and the other through those who have already accepted Jesus as their saviour.⁵² In all its historical variations, Dispensationalism adamantly rejects the so-called 'replacement theology': as already noted, a post-apostolic contention maintaining that the Church and its members have superseded Israel as new Covenantal people - or, otherwise put, that the promises God originally made to the Israelites are now fulfilled in and through the Church.⁵³ According to all Dispensationalists alike, Christianity is neither the culmination of God's activity in the Old Testament, nor the novel 'light to the nations' whose coming was already foretold by the Hebrew prophets. To them, Israel indisputably refers to those physical descendants of Abraham who continue to be entrusted with a mission of cosmic redemption.⁵⁴

Rather than a 'spiritualized Israel', the Church represents a 'great parenthesis' - a temporary interruption in the divine program of salvation, resulting from the Jewish failure to recognize Jesus as their saviour. As previously mentioned, this failure caused God to halt the prophetic clock and reshuffle His plans. The 'prophetic time warp' represented by the Church's age, however, does not spell the end of God's love for His Chosen. Nor does it abrogate His Covenantal promises to them. When the current Church's parenthesis elapses on earth (an imminent event according to Darby), God will resume the Israelite dispensation and bring it to its completion. At that time, the

Jews will be once again offered a chance to accept their 'true' Messiah. Such an event will signal the 'fullness of time' with the irruption of that 'glorious era of peace and righteousness known as the Millennium'.⁵⁵ A major inconsistency flawing the logic of Darby's argument consists in the paradox of an omnipotent and omniscient God who is forced to alter His cosmic design as a result of a 'distraction' on the part of His Chosen.⁵⁶

Israel and the Church are to be kept separate, insofar as they are the focus of two different stages of prophetic fulfilment, the 'earthly' and the 'heavenly'. Dispensationalists distinctively assert that Judaism is a mundane entity with certain earthly-political expectations and objectives to attend to - namely, the repossession of the Promised Land, the reinstitution of a Davidic Kingdom with full sovereignty over Eretz Ysrael, and the reintroduction of sacrificial rituals in a rebuilt Third Temple. We shall see that the Church instead belongs and shall soon return to an extra-mundane realm, to live in close connection with God. In keeping with the logic of this Eschatological script, Christianity's status would appear to be subordinated to that of Israel - and not the other way around as it could be argued from supersessionist angle. Within many US Evangelical congregations, it is frequently held that Christians' primary duty is to 'bless Israel' because neither the Gospels nor the Church would have come into existence unless the Jews had fallen into 'unbelief' by allowing Jesus to be crucified.⁵⁷ But a further level of Evangelical involvement in favour of the Zionist cause is justified in light of the Eschatological function the Jewish people would play 'intra-historically' to expedite the Christian ascension to heaven.

6.4 Restorationism

The belief that a Jewish restoration to Palestine plays a critical role in the process of Christian salvation predates Dispensationalism, stretching back at least to Oliver Cromwell's England.⁵⁸ It is nevertheless only within Darby's End Time scenarios that such a belief reaches its full-blown theological systematization. From the dual Covenant logic flows that the Church, rather than being designed to supersede the earthly Israel, must attend to a precise Biblical responsibility towards her. For Darby and his acolytes, it is primary Christian obligation to 'bless' Israel, namely by assisting the Jews in regaining the fullness of their God-appointed territorial inheritance in Palestine.⁵⁹ On the satisfaction of this religious duty depends the Evangelical transition from

present deficiency to Millenarian fulfilment - to be exact, the Church's ascension to the heavenly status that is associated, as we shall see in the following pages, with the moment of the Rapture. Without any precedent in Christian theology, argues Sizer, Dispensationalists equate the 'restoration ministry' to the apostolic commission to preach the gospel to the whole world:

In the same sense that the first apostles were commissioned by the Lord to be his witnesses from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth, [Evangelical Zionists] feel compelled to proclaim the word of Israel's restoration to every country and in every place where there are Christian believers'⁶⁰

Even at a cursory level, it is impossible not to notice a fateful convergence between US Evangelical Zionism and Israeli Religious Zionism. Despite unbridgeable theological differences, the two theo-political projects read the physical ingathering of the exiles in Palestine as the dawn of a Messianic-Millenarian era that has been foreordained by God Himself. For both movements alike, a Jewish exclusive and perpetual repossession of the Land is a law of historical necessity stemming from an unconditional reading of the divine promises to Israel. As previously explained⁶¹, in its early formulations the Covenant enshrines an almost unrestricted entitlement to Eretz Ysrael; whereas, by the time Moses reinstates the 'berith' at Sinai, the Israelites are warned that their right to the Land remains strictly contingent upon their faithfulness to the Torah. Donald Wagner, a Christian theologian who opposes the 'joint enterprise' between US Evangelicals and national-religious Israelis, quotes this last reading to contend that the Land belongs to God alone and it is not at Israel's disposal. Once the Covenant is interpreted in light of its Mosaic reformulation, Eretz Ysrael would not be 'an end to itself', but rather 'an instrument' whereby the Chosen fulfil their 'religious calling'. Accordingly, the Jews must relate to the Land as if they were mere 'tenants' or 'caretakers' whose occupancy is conditional on them living under the requirements of the Law. In addition to the injunctions to purity and holiness, the Law also outlines clear obligations to practice justice and not to abuse non-Jewish 'sojourners'.⁶²

In view of the Eschatological import attached to a Jewish presence in Judea, Samaria and beyond, US Evangelical Zionists invariably tend to negate or minimize such terms of conditionality. In that way, they augment the Religious Zionist approach to Eretz Ysrael as an object of religious yearning whose 'liberation' from non-Jewish hands is tantamount to salvation. Despite radical differences in their respective Eschatological outlooks, the two movements align in believing that redemption will come only when Israel settles the whole

Land. Quite tellingly, they rely on the same Biblical passages featuring unrestrained Covenantal rights to bestow a gloss of sacredness on the settlement project in the occupied territories.⁶³ With their single-minded focus on the Judaization of the West Bank, Religious Zionists along with their Evangelical counterparts elevate the import of the Land over that of the spiritual relationship with Yahweh. In Wagner's view, whenever Eretz Ysrael becomes a primary object of devotion, the Chosen fall into 'idolatry'. By considering the Land as a 'goal' in itself - and not as 'means' to realize their Covenantal duties, the Jews would attribute absolute value to that which is not absolute. In particular, they would act towards a representation of God as if it was God.⁶⁴ Wagner adds that this major sin, in addition to the lack of humane treatment for the non-Jewish sojourner, might cause the Israelites another exile rather than a final restoration.⁶⁵

However well intentioned to promote peace Wagner might be, his argument seems fraught with a sense of 'righteous innocence'. As Reverend Robert O. Smith observes, whenever 'Christians begin travelling down lines of thought which argue that Jews should again be removed from the Land because they have failed to properly observe the Torah or its demands of justice, Jews might understandably become quite nervous and irritated'. Christians, continues Smith, should always engage the question concerning Jewish alleged violations against Palestinians' rights in humility – foremost, by keeping in mind that 'Christian tradition of theological anti-Judaism and historical legacy of murderous anti-Semitism', two factors that no doubt contributed to 'the founding of Israel as a modern nation-state and the subsequent displacement of millions of Palestinians'.⁶⁶

6.5 Purging Eretz Ysrael

A meaningful juxtaposition between US Evangelical and Jewish Religious Zionism consists in the fact that, in both cases, the problems stemming from the Arab presence on the sacred soil of Eretz Ysrael are addressed eminently through the lens of similar ancestral slogans, dogmas, or invocations. So seem to be the solutions. Both movements call upon a mythical past inscribed into the Biblical tradition to make the 'state of things' in Palestine appear as foreordained and immutable. Myth should be here understood following Bruce Lincoln's suggestion: not in a pejorative sense, as a false or arbitrary story, but in guise of something regarded by its proponents as a paradigmatic and

unquestionable truth.⁶⁷ Insofar as Evangelical and Jewish Religious Zionism are concerned, the instrumentality of the biblical tradition or, more precisely, of highly discriminating interpretations of it, is twofold. On the one hand, the obsessive repetition of the same authoritative truths enables the two Millenarian-Messianic communities to reproduce their identity in the accustomed forms; on the other, such a recitation is also strategically deployed to deprive contending narratives or claims of their own authority. Further, we submit that, especially when it escalates towards exclusionary-Manichean thinking, this process of de-legitimation of the 'other' plays an essential part in the pursuit of the respective Jewish and Christian Eschatological goals. To achieve wondrous salvation in the final age, one should first of all search for 'a blemish that is clearly visible and that may be addressed as the source of all trouble and infirmity - a blemish that must be cleansed, that must be removed and, with it, all the problems that beset us'.⁶⁸

In his ethnographic study about the settlers' movement, Fiege observes that in recent years two opposing dynamics have been taking place in Israel's wider society. As for the majority of secular Jews the Arabs have increasingly turned from threatening enemies into potential negotiation partners, the Gush Emunim settlers have done their utmost to perpetuate their status of 'ultimate others'.⁶⁹ Rather than framing the 'non-Jewish issue' through the legal categories of the state, the national-religious activists traditionally place both Arab Israelis and Palestinians within the status of 'gerim' – a halakhic shorthand for 'resident aliens'.⁷⁰

As the leading school of Religious Zionist thought, the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva considers universal principles of self-determination and equal civil-human rights as not normatively binding in the Jews' dealings with the Arabs. Democratic principles do not hold in the case of Israel, because they are nothing but corrupting offspring of that Hellenizing-Western culture, which alienates the Chosen from their redemptive task.⁷¹ The actualization of the 'Jewish law of destiny' through the conquest and settlement of Eretz Ysrael overrides any ethical consideration for the Gentiles who reside on its sacred soil. Rabbi Shlomo Aviner reminds his audience that 'Israel was commanded in the Torah that "thou shalt be holy", but [it was] not commanded to be moral; and the general codes of morality which have been accepted by mankind, in principle at least, do not commit the Jew, for he was chosen to be beyond them'.⁷² It follows that resident aliens may live in the Land as long as they do not oppose in any form or fashion its Judaization, namely with their demands for national self-

determination. An Arab who advances such a claim, adds Rabbi Aviner, 'is neither a Palestinian nationalist nor a proud patriot; he is not even deluded. He is simply a liar because he, along with all his compatriots, knows that the Arabs hold no rights to Eretz Ysrael'.⁷³

Rabbi Zvi Tau, today the most prominent theological figure within Merkaz Harav Yeshiva, describes the Israeli-Palestinian dispute as a modern rendition of the ancient struggle opposing the Israelites to the Philistines (one of Israel's archetypal enemies). Recurring to authoritative biblical precedents affords the rabbi to underscore the intrinsically different stature of the two contenders:

The Philistines are the absolute contrast to Israel's course of life. Theirs is a semblance of nationality. They masquerade as a people, they cloak themselves with all the national features – and yet they lack any essence, any content of their own. The Philistines have no value, role or hidden talent that is required to complete the form of humanity, nor do they have any foothold in eternity, as do the Jewish people, whose nationality is connected with the divine plan of restoring the world and making all creatures achieve their true purpose.

Now as then, Tau charges, 'Ahmed' and 'Mustafa' pretend to have a collective identity as a nation, but only as an excuse to steal the Land from the Jews, and in that way forestall their mission of cosmic redemption.⁷⁴

Overwhelmingly, US Christian Zionists side with these Jewish exclusivist positions. For the sake of staying true to the divine plan, the Chosen cannot be governed by ordinary norms and therefore can lay aside any concern for democracy, justice or international law. Bluntly put, it is Darby's prophecy that settles the issue once and for all, and the gentiles can only adjust. The Eschatological end (the ingathering of the exiles and the establishment of Jewish state in Palestine) amply justifies the means (displacing Arab population from their homes).⁷⁵ Akin to their national-religious counterparts, Evangelical Dispensationalists recite selected Biblical mantras to back such statements. Recurrently, they invoke the scriptural evidence that 'God owned the Promised Land and had deeded it to the children of Abraham through Isaac, not Ishmael' - the firstborn and illegitimate son of the Jewish patriarch by his maidservant Hagar. Even in the Dispensationalist narrative, the present day conflict between Arabs and Jews is depicted as perpetrating an ancestral feud - in this case, the litigation between Abraham's rejected and appointed offspring.⁷⁶ It is worth mentioning that according to the Aggadah (Rabbinic teachings, legends, ethical maxims, etc.), the ancestor of the Ishmaelites and, by extension, all the Arab people is ethically connoted as he who dishonours women, worships idols and attempts to murder his stepbrother.⁷⁷

Another key overlapping between the two Chiliastic discourses consists in the shared idea that Restorationism remains indissolubly linked to the pursuit of purity. Not only do the respective Eschatological plans impose a Jewish ingathering into and monopoly over Eretz Ysrael, but they also imply that that sacred enclosure will be purged from its corrupting agents. Darby himself was quite explicit in stating that for the establishment of the Millennium, the Holy Land must be rid of everything that is not ethnically and religiously 'sound'. He nonetheless saw this cleansing as an act depending on divine fiat:

The first thing, then, which the Lord will do is to purify His Land (the Land which belongs to the Jews) of the Tyrians, the Philistines, the Sidonians; of Edom and Moab, and Amon - of all the wicked, in short from the Nile to the Euphrates. It will be done by the power of Christ in favour of His people re-established by His goodness'.⁷⁸

Along the lines of Rabbi Tau, Darby recurs to Biblical references reminiscent of the Book of Joshua. As Moses' successor, Joshua led, by force of arms and with divine intercession, the conquest and settlement of the Land of Canaan. For the very first time in their brief existence, the Hebrews put an end to their nomadic lifestyle and established a homeland. Following a plan foreordained by God, they became 'Israelites'. As recounted in the Bible, this national foundation includes murderous purification of the Land from the autochthonous tribes (the seven polytheistic nations of Canaan listed by Darby except one), which the Book of Joshua purports as 'heathens'.⁷⁹

That restoration to a harmonious whole entails purification from the 'other side' - a mystical force that embodies evil, defilement or moral corruption - is not an exceptional tenet. Historically, this theme has received countless applications, both in religious and secular discourses. However, it seems to be compulsively recurrent in both Christian and Religious Zionism's imagery. As previously noted, drawing from Rabbis Kook's reading of the Cabalistic tradition, Gush Emunim sees the systematic expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank as nothing less than a 'metaphysical transformation' - a redeeming act that transfers quotas of Eretz Ysrael from the power of Satan to the divine sphere and thereby advances the process of cosmic salvation. In the national-religious idiom, territorial conquest involves at one and the same time outer and inner refinement. Purgation through settling the Land is so all-encompassing that it results in personal self-purification. Insofar as Eretz Ysrael is liberated from the 'aliens', the pious Jew is redeemed from his own 'alienness', and therefore pointed towards sanctity.⁸⁰ The corollary of this

assumption is that even a minimal territorial withdrawal would restore Satan's sovereignty over the Land and the individual soul.

US Dispensationalism puts an analogous argument forward. Giving up land for the establishment of a Palestinian state would be the first step towards the dissolution of a fully Jewish Eretz Israel, and therefore it would hinder the primary focus of Evangelical identity and Eschatological yearning. During a heart-felt speech given in Jerusalem in 2003, televangelist Pat Robertson summerized the motives at the basis of the Christian Zionist objection to a 'two-state solution'. The pastor exhorted his beloved Israeli listeners not to commit 'a national suicide' by abiding to the international community's recommendations. Any hope to achieve a sustainable peace by dividing the Land is illusory, argued Robertson, namely in view of the inherently malignant and savage disposition of the Arab counterparts:

I hardly find it necessary to remind this audience of the stated objectives of Yasser Arafat, the PLO, Hamas, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad. Their goal is not peace, but the final destruction of the State of Israel. At no time do they, or their allies in the Muslim world, acknowledge the sovereignty of Israel over even one square inch of territory in the Middle East. If a Palestinian State is created in the heart of Israel with sovereign power to deploy troops, import modern weapons [even weapons of mass destruction] and operate with full secrecy and diplomatic immunity, the ability of the State of Israel to defend itself will be fatally compromised. The slogan 'land for peace' is a cruel chimera.⁸¹

For Christian and Jewish Religious Zionists alike, Israel's withdrawals from the Sinai Peninsula and Southern Lebanon brought neither stabilisation in the region nor a lasting peace with the Arab nations, but more terroristic attacks against the Jewish state. In the same way, Sharon's decision to unilaterally disengage from Gaza in 2005 had the sole outcome of transforming the strip into a launching pad for Hamas' missiles. In both circles, it is equally held that any attempt to create a Palestinian democracy would be utterly pointless given the Muslim determination to sabotage the divine Covenant and annihilate Israel. Islamofascists have no desire for a 'two-state solution', but only for a 'one-state solution' where Shari'a law governs the whole of Palestine.⁸² Invariably, the two Millenarian-Messianic narratives operate through conceptual categories hinting to Samuel Huntington's thesis of a clash between 'sealed off' civilizations. The Jewish exceptionalism is starkly pitted against a menacing Islamic world and without problematising the myriad of facets and undercurrents animating both terms of the dyad.

Given the political visibility they hold domestically and also the repercussions that might reverberate on an international scale from such a

policy, the national-religious leadership has always avoided calling for a mass Arab transfer from Eretz Ysrael. Although the majority of its fringe members would not object to such a radical measure, mainstream Gush Emunim recognizes the resident aliens an autonomous status, whilst reserving 'forced eviction' only to those few agitators who refuse to accept or fight against the Jewish presence and sovereignty.⁸³ Nonetheless, some voices within Merkaz Harav circles contemplate an unrestrained commandment to ethnic cleansing in the 'state of exception' - that is, in case of holy war. This Torah-based call for genocide finds its primary scriptural bases in Exodus 17:16, Deuteronomy 25:17-19 and, more recurrently, in I Samuel 15:3. Here the Lord of hosts imparts to King Saul the ruthless manner through which to eradicate Amalek and its seeds from Eretz Ysrael: 'now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass'. The Amalekites feature in the Old Testament as Israel's most inveterate foes. In view of their boundless cruelty and treacherous nature, the conflict against them is often depicted as a manifestation of the archetypal opposition between light and darkness, purity and pollution, or between the people of God and the forces of evil.⁸⁴

In a controversial article published in February 1980 under the title 'The Commandment of Genocide in the Torah', Rabbi Israel Hess alluded to the Arabs living in Eretz Ysrael as direct descendants of the Biblical Amalekites, whilst considering waging war against them a sacred obligation (*milchemet mitzvah*), to be carried out until their memory is 'blotted out' forever.⁸⁵ Although they represent a wild departure from commonly accepted ultra-Orthodox thinking about the Jews' relationship with the gentiles, Rabbi Hess' speculations received a first application in the early 1980s, during the Israeli invasion in Southern Lebanon - a region that Religious Zionists regard as being part of Eretz Ysrael. At that time, the military rabbinate, traditionally infused with national-religious fervour, exhorted all the IDF soldiers to follow in the footsteps of Saul and Joshua, and hence deliver the Land from the powers of Satan by exterminating its non-Jewish inhabitants.⁸⁶ In more recent times, during the January 2009 military campaign in Gaza, 'the morals of the battlefield' were once again set on Biblical grounds, stirring a huge debate with the national and international media questioning the secular nature of the IDF.⁸⁷ In order to boost the troops' fighting spirit, the military chaplains delivered pre-battle sermons casting the 22-day operation as a merciless Eschatological confrontation between *bnei ha-or* – the children of light – and *bnei ha-hasheh* – the

children of darkness.⁸⁸ *Haaretz*, one of the national leading dailies, reported that before their units went into the combat zone, several soldiers were passed out IDF-issued flyers with the stamp of military rabbinate stating that: 'we are the people of Israel, we came by a miracle to the Eretz Ysrael, God returned us to the Land, now we need to struggle to get rid of the gentiles that are interfering with our conquest of the Land'.⁸⁹ Other pamphlets handed out to the troops quoted Rabbi Aviner as equating the Gaza's Palestinians to the Philistines,⁹⁰ whilst warning the reader that: 'when you show mercy to a cruel enemy, you are being cruel to pure and honest soldiers. This is terribly immoral. These are not games at the amusement park where sportsmanship teaches one to make concessions. This is a war on murderers'.⁹¹

Following mainstream Gush Emunim's cautionary approach to the Arab issue, US Evangelical Zionists avoid advocating ethnic cleansing of non-Jewish populations in unequivocal terms. This notwithstanding, they never refrained from backing the most regressive components within the Israeli religious and secular right. Nor do they keep from embracing Gush Emunim's lexicon to vilify the Palestinians' national aspirations. To many Dispensationalists, the Arabs currently residing within Eretz Ysrael are, at best, 'alien sojourners' or, at worst, 'Philistines' and 'Amalekites'. Southern-bred Baptist pastor, former Arkansas governor and 2008 Republican presidential primaries candidate Mike Huckabee is well-known for his unwavering support to a fully Jewish Jerusalem and for championing the settlers' divine right to live and build in Judea and Samaria as they wish. In October 2007, during a speech given whilst he was still campaigning for the party nomination in New Hampshire, Huckabee expressed his frustration at past and present Israeli decisions to trade portions of Eretz Ysrael for a diplomatic agreement with the Palestinian authorities. Once asked by Rabbi Moshe Bleich about the feasibility of a two-state solution, he argued that:

From its own standpoint of security, Israel should not give up the West Bank or the Golan Heights. I support the creation of a Palestinian state, but I believe that it should be formed outside of Israel. Egypt and Saudi Arabia are possible alternatives. The Arabs have far more land than the Israelis and it would only be fair for other Arab nations to give the Palestinians land for a state, rather than carving it out of the tiny Israeli state.⁹²

In August 2009, Huckabee was reported as touring the Holy Land under the sponsorship of *Ateret Haco Hanim*, a US registered non-profit organization which fundraises an average of \$2 million per year to advance its 'Jewish reclamation plan' - national-religious front project aiming to win 'demographically' East

Jerusalem by replacing its Arab residents with pro-Gush Emunim Jewish families.⁹³ According to New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind, one of Huckabee's travelling mates, the foreign trip's overall purpose was nevertheless that of 'shining the spotlight' on President Obama's 'horrific attempts' to revive the peace processes in the region, by pressing Netanyahu to halt settlement activities in occupied territories. With such a goal in mind, Huckabee visited and pledged allegiance to some of the Hilltop Youth's illegal outposts in the West Bank, the presence of which defiantly opposes not only the US diplomatic course, but also the decisions of the Israeli government.⁹⁴ In recent times, splinter groups like the Hilltop Youth made a name for themselves for leading an isolated, ascetic and commune-like lifestyle aiming at reproducing that of the Biblical Hebrews; fostering an unprecedented delegitimization of the Zionist state's sovereign authority; invoking a theocratic rule shaped upon a strict interpretation of the Halakha; and channelling their Messianic grievances through terroristic mayhem and callous retaliation against the neighbouring Palestinian villages (the aforementioned 'price tag' policy).

Many experts on the subject submit that, given its strong antinomian charge against the secular Zionist institutions, the vision of Messianic re-birth advocated by this new stream of religious settlers represents a further radicalization of Rabbi Meir Kahane's pseudo-Fascist ideology – rather than an offshoot of Gush Emunim. It is interesting to note that what represents a seldom confessed 'state of exception' amid the most zealous of the Religious Zionists becomes an openly admitted 'norm' for all the Kahanist. Rabbi Kahane postulated that the presence of impure 'goyim' in the midst of Eretz Ysrael (Muslim, Druze, and Christian alike) constitute 'the greatest desecration of the divine name', a major obstacle between the Chosen and their redemptive goal. From this perspective, the negation of the gentiles' basic civil-human rights, their forceful removal from the Land and, eventually, systematic violence against them become theo-political objectives in their own right - just as important as the Jewish return to and settlement in Eretz Ysrael.⁹⁵ To Baruch Ben Yossef, a contemporary Kahane devotee, the real and only catalyst of Messianic redemption is a ruthless war aimed at extirpating the *Sitra Achra* - the forces of evil of the Other Side - from Eretz Ysrael:

If we want to understand Rabbi Kahane, his message was that we need to go to war because, in fact, what will bring our redemption is not prayer. What will bring redemption is war. But today, we're going in exactly the opposite direction. Instead of war, there's Peace Now*. There's an attempt to prevent war at all costs. And if we can force the army to go back to being offensive, an army of revenge,

an army which cares about Jews more than anybody else, then we'll be able to bring the final redemption in the only way possible, through war. War now!⁹⁶

In the mid-1980s, Ravitzky, Sprinzak, and many other concerned Israeli scholars described Kahanism's rising success in view of the rabbi's remarkable ability to strike 'sensitive chords' in the collective anxieties of that particular time. His inflammatory Messianism focused on 'one single guilty party', 'a suitable target for one's blame' whose elimination was key to solve a set of very different problems - the threat posed by the non-Jewish demographic growth, Arab terrorism, along with other major national security concerns. Undoubtedly, with Kahane the process of de-humanization-demonization through Biblical precedents reached its apex. In angry editorials or during mass rallies, the rabbi's populism went as far as to endorse a racist approach worthy of Hitler's propaganda. The non-Jewish others were rendered 'invisible' as human beings, a sort of symbolic death anticipating and preparing their physical disposal - an act that, on this ground, is invariably committed in good conscience and for the sake of the highest ideals. Kahanism has been often equated to Nazism because its 'new gospel Jewish self-transformation' demanded the eviction of all the husks of Ishmael. These were labelled as 'vermin', 'dogs', or 'foxes', roaming around Eretz Ysrael, with the main purpose to seduce and rape Jewish girls. Preoccupations with racial purity-pollution were so obsessive to the rabbi's mind that he invoked legislation imposing long prison sentences upon any Arab who had sexual intercourse with a Jewish woman.⁹⁷

Today, this venomous rhetoric finds a significant resonance on the margins of the national-religious front, within those third-generation young *sabras*, born and raised on the hills of Judea and Samaria, and extremely disaffected with the current standing of both secular Zionism and mainstream Gush Emunim. These are the highly militant splinter groups to which many US Evangelical Zionists lend financial and political support. Huckabee's recent pilgrimage to the 'City of David' also included a visit to Kiryat Arba, the largest of Gush Emunim settlements and, at the same time, the hotbed of the ultra-rightist Kach and Kahane Chai parties – two movements that were officially outlawed in 1994, and are still considered terroristic organizations by Israel, European Union, Canada and United States.⁹⁸ That these Hilltop Youth settlers incubated in this particular ideological milieu seems to be confirmed by the nature of methods they espouse to prevent any further government-sponsored disengagement from the occupied territories. Especially after the Gaza pullout, they have been

systematically engaging in violent acts against the Palestinians in the hope of eliciting a new Intifada and perhaps even a war between Israel and the Arab nations.⁹⁹

6.6 People who must dwell alone

By addressing modern Israel through the same exclusionary Biblical claims, US Evangelicals and Religious Zionists remove the Jewish state from the category of ordinary countries. Their paradigmatic myths equally argue that the only nation God ever established and appointed as a guiding light to the rest of the world must necessarily dwell alone, as a cell hermetically sealed and divorced from reality. Such an ideal, implicit but rarely admitted within Dispensationalist and national-religious circles, acquires the clarity of a programmatic manifesto for past and present Kahanists. For all of them, nevertheless, the Jewish identity seems to be invariably expressed in negative terms, and within a context of confrontation and conflict:

Who are we? We are chosen, we are special, we are supreme; we have been set apart from the gentiles and their abominations. No positive content is added to these declarations. What is good is good simply by virtue of its being the opposite of that which is outside, of the other, whatever it or he may be: a separate people, set aside, isolated and different, living apart from all the rest, without the defiling contact with a culture conceived in uncleanness and born in profane vanity.¹⁰⁰

In order to fulfil her destiny and make history reach its summit, Israel must keep apart from the global community and act outside its recognized norms. By disregarding basic democratic principles and disdaining civil-human rights of the resident aliens, such Christian and Jewish theo-politics are conjointly reversing secular Zionism's original project to normalize the Chosen, putting an end to their dissociation from the surrounding world. The irony, it would seem, is that actualizing Israel's universalist mission of restoration causes her a regression into what Boas Evron has called a 'ghetto mentality' - an impenetrable and self-sustaining psychological mould in which daydreaming about Jewish might, election and final victory over Israel's foes intermingles with and is reinforced by a feeling of bitter embattlement and persecution. Indeed, superiority complex and victimisation become here the 'two magnetic foci of the same [paranoid] power field'.¹⁰¹ For national-religious settlers, Kahanists and their Dispensationalist allies, Israel's international isolation and the mounting 'goyish' hostility against her are at one and the same time a necessity and a kind of blessing – the indisputable proofs confirming the Jewish

uniqueness in the eye of God and the approaching final triumph under His auspices.¹⁰²

6.7 Jacob's troubles

Following the premillennial rationale described in the first section of this study, Dispensationalism reads the current historical situation as 'beyond repair'. The Messianic advent must be preceded by 'the birth pangs' in which the negative reign of the Antichrist temporarily prevails. In keeping with this idea, Darby speculates that the Jewish full restoration to Eretz Ysrael heralds a 'great tribulation': a seven-year period of unparalleled anarchy, apostasy, turmoil, and natural catastrophes signalling that the lowest ebb has been reached on the global scale. But a world led astray by Satan's emissaries also entails that the Church's dispensation is close to completion, with Israel resuming once again at the centre stage in God's plan. After having been suspended during the great parenthesis, the prophetic countdown restarts by focusing on the earthly people who rejected Jesus in the first place. This latter-day trial also known as 'Jacob's troubles'¹⁰³ exclusively concerns God's dealing with His Chosen. We shall see that, in view of its heavenly status, the faithful members of the Church are completely exempted from such End Time woes.

The great tribulation climaxes with the battle of Armageddon, a military conflagration in the midst of Eretz Ysrael.¹⁰⁴ The Antichrist's treacherous rule will last until Christ returns in glory to vanquish his demonic armies, end his tyranny, and restore an earthly Davidic Kingdom centred on Jerusalem. Once delivered from all enemies, Israel would eventually acknowledge Jesus as Messiah, and enjoy beside Him a privileged status in the Millennium. All humankind will then be able to live in peace and safety, whilst the Antichrist is cast into a lake of fire and Satan remains bound in a bottomless pit. At the close of the one-thousand-year era, however, the forces of evil will be unleashed from their constraints one last time, to organize a short-lived revolt against the Christ's government, which shall be 'squashed' by the heavenly fire. Darby's master plot concludes with a general resurrection, a universal judgement on the basis of how the gentiles have treated the Jews, followed by a timeless state of bliss and perfection.

It is often overlooked that the divine wrath that will be poured out onto the world during the tribulation and, later, the cataclysmic destructions ensuing the battle of Armageddon have the main purpose to make the earthly people

receive the returned Jesus as their Messiah. Only in this way, can the Old Testament promises to Israel be brought to ultimate completion.¹⁰⁵ This focus on the Jews is even more ostensible if one considers the 'atypical nature' of the interlude between history and eternity. Contrary to any premillennial convention on the subject, nearly all Dispensationalists envisage a Millennium featuring the Chosen and their sacred rituals as main protagonists. According to Darby's speculations, a rebuilt Temple of Jerusalem will be the climax of the Millenarian Age, with the Levitical Priesthood and the sacrificial system reinstituted within its sacred walls.¹⁰⁶ In view of its Jewish-centred essence, Darby's theology goes against the grain of mainstream Christology – namely, because it overtly contradicts the assumption that Jesus' redemptive sacrifice at Golgotha superseded the Mosaic Law as a means to atone for human sins.¹⁰⁷

6.8 Vertical escapism

Deeply intertwined with the concept of a separation between the earthly Israel and the heavenly Church is the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture, a watershed concept in American premillennial culture and at the same time the theological backbone of Dispensationalism. This doctrine posits that just prior to the downward spiral of cataclysms, the 'true' Church (made by the pious Christians who have already died, together with those who are still alive) will be 'raptured' out of the world to 'meet the Lord in the air', whilst the rest of the 'unbelieving' humanity is 'left behind' to face the tribulation and the Armageddon's final holocaust.¹⁰⁸

Mainline Biblical scholarship charges that Darby's rapture has no scriptural foundation, and often denounces it as another example of highly concocted theology, obtained by 'piecing together' various yet not plausibly related verses from the Christian canon.¹⁰⁹ This criticism notwithstanding, to millions of Dispensationalists, the hopeful anticipation of a last minute and exclusivist exemption from the End Time suffering finds its indisputable scriptural proof in a literalist-futurist reading of Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians: 'At the sound of the archangel's voice and God's trumpet-call, the Lord himself will descend from heaven; first the Christian dead will rise, then we who are left alive shall join them, caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we shall always be with the Lord'.¹¹⁰ Rather peculiarly, proponents of such a hermeneutics hold that Christ will have in fact a 'two-stage' Parousia. The first Second Coming will be visible only to the Church's members, as Jesus secretly

raptures 'the saints' in heaven, sparing them the earthly trials. The second return, known as 'glorious appearing', will be instead visible to everyone else (Jews included) at the close of the tribulation, when the Messiah defeats the Antichrist and inaugurates his Jerusalem-based kingdom.¹¹¹ Today, the pre-tribulation rapture represents by far the most commonly preached Eschatological scenario in US conservative Evangelical circles. High-profile televangelists make it a pivotal theme in their broadcastings, warning the millions of viewers of the horror they would face if they missed the opportunity to meet the Lord in the air. Hundreds, if not thousands, of websites are also devoted to promoting such doctrine towards global audiences.

According to O'Leary, the Doctrine of the Rapture offers at least three observable advantages. First, it resolves the problems arising from prophetic disconfirmation, which in turn are generated by the need to set a precise date for the Apocalypse. The sense of an imminent Rapture – whose plausibility was further strengthened by the historical realizations of May 1948 and June 1967 – provides 'an incentive for believers to organize their personal lives around the thought that Christ could return at any moment, [but] without committing them to a falsifiable scenario of last-day events'.¹¹² Second, by placing believers in a perpetual state of excitement and uncertainty, the lack of a specific date for the Lord's secret return functions as a remarkable spur to keep one's soul in check in terms of self-purification and faithfulness – or, as Fenn describes it, it puts Dispensationalists 'in the middle of chronic purgatory', relentlessly on the watch for whatever might delay or impair their unique chance to be snatched away from a collapsing world.¹¹³ Third, adopting Ernst Becker's terminology, the Rapture might be assessed as one of most perfected 'immortality projects' known to contemporary Western civilization – an effective symbolic expedient assuaging the distinctively human fear of death that stems from the likewise distinctively human awareness of it.¹¹⁴ Sandeen, along with Weber and many other experts on US conservative Evangelicalism, comments that the 'psychology of deliverance' inherent in the any-moment rapture is a more potent determinative in adding adherents to the 'Dispensationalist party' than any other logics underpinning Darby's Biblical exegeses. In other words, the core of premillennial consensus would be built around the 'confidence that current toils, frustrations, disappointments, or difficulties' will be forever eliminated by a 'vertical escapism' towards heaven.¹¹⁵ In his historical study accounting for the changes in the Western attitude towards mortality, Philippe Ariès maintains that the old, durable, and massive sentiment of familiarity with

one's own finitude (a sentiment distinguished by 'neither fear or despair, half-way between resignation and mystical trust') has been progressively replaced by the 'pornography of death'. The interdiction on the thought of dying has become today a culturally acknowledged taboo, replacing sex as principal forbidden subject of conversation. It deserves attention that, according to the French medievalist, a systematic 'denial of death' aimed at preserving the diametrically opposed idea of an 'inalterable happiness' began to take place in US culture from around the beginning of the last century - that is, at the same time in which Darby's prophetic speculations were acquiring momentum within the emerging Fundamentalist movement.¹¹⁶

Taking the analysis of its symbolism to a deeper level, it may be convincingly argued that the Rapture is an immortality project in which survival demands seeing somebody else suffering and dying in one's place. Those who espoused Darby's End Time scenario expect to watch the demise of the 'unbelieving world' from a front seat in heaven's balconies - a 'vantage point' in which the raptured saints feel secure from all the violent wars, persecutions, earthquakes, and plagues befalling the wicked that have been left behind. To Rossing, a bird's eye view on the world's obliteration whilst the faithful can escape its torments represents 'what Dispensationalism is all about'.¹¹⁷ This voyeuristic quest for immortality recalls the human desire for outliving others so masterfully described by Elias Canetti. Every 'moment of survival', Canetti maintains, is not simply an immense pleasure and relief, but an intrinsic 'moment of power':

The terror at the dead man lying before one gives way to satisfaction: one is not dead oneself. One stands upright oneself, unhurt, untouched. And whether he is an enemy whom one has killed, a friend who has died, it suddenly looks as though death, which one was threatened by, had been diverted from oneself to that person. It is this feeling that very swiftly takes the upper hand; what was only just terror is now permeated with satisfaction. Never is the standing man, for whom everything is still possible, more aware of his standing. Never does he feel better upright. The moment holds him fast, the sense of superiority over the dead man binds him to the corpse. (...) Survival is central to power. [It] is not only ruthless, it is concrete, a precisely defined, unmistakable situation. Man never fully believes in death so long as he has not experienced it. But he experiences it in others. They die before his eyes, each as an individual, and every individual who dies convinces him of death. He nourishes his terror of it, and he has died in his place. The living man has used the other as a dummy, so to speak. The living man never considers himself greater than when confronted with the dead man, who is felled forever: at this moment, the living man feels as though he had grown. (...) But even if the deceased meant little to one and no special demonstration of grief is expected, it nevertheless would flout good taste to reveal any of the satisfaction at being confronted with the dead man. It is a triumph that remains concealed, that one admits to nobody else and perhaps not even to oneself.¹¹⁸

Dispensationalism turns what should remain a discretely concealed triumph into a loud and clear theological statement. According to Michael Northcott, a religious community steeped in the suggestion of a selective Armageddon - in which only the elected will escape, survive and watch from above the violence unfolding below – is ideologically prepared or perhaps even prone to social inequalities and polarizations. The Christian ethics inherent in Darby's doctrine, adds Northcott, impeccably match with the moral dispositions underpinning the neo-liberalist free market, rampant corporate capitalism, gated communities, and policies envisaging high rates of incarceration for controlling the most disadvantaged members of society – all present day US realities in which the rich are incommensurably 'blessed', whilst all the rest are left behind in the tribulation zone.¹¹⁹

6.9 Armageddon complex

A part from lending unconditional support to modern Israel and backing the national-religious enterprise in the West Bank, those US Dispensationalists who live in the shadow of Second Coming are also renowned as strong advocates of the so-called 'Armageddon complex': a theological outlook which predicts and imposes an End of Days cataclysm in the Middle East as a precondition to bring about the ultimate fulfilment. Mirroring the original archetype of the Apocalypse, Dispensationalists always see history in a descending phase: nothing pure can be regenerated, but it must necessarily decay before attaining ultimate perfection. Once the lowest ebb has been reached, a cosmic ordeal is needed to sweep away the old and flawed order, making room for the 'new heaven and new earth'. Essential to this Eschatological pattern is the utter rejection of the current historical aeon, which is by assumption denounced as beyond repair: too corrupt for reforms and therefore doomed to complete annihilation. The appeal of this worldview resides in the fact, through its lens, global turmoil and anomie can be turned into an assurance of imminent redemption. In the Dispensationalist case the harsher the birth pangs, the sooner the rapture. Further, the catastrophic transition between the two ages shows no compassion whatsoever towards those who remain outside the circle of the elected.¹²⁰ In light of these rationales, premillennial Dispensationalism has been invariably labelled as a 'pathological theology', whose downfalls go far beyond those underpinning any consequentialist logic – a logic according to

which the absoluteness of the end overrides any ethical consideration about the means of realization. Considering the images of divine warfare and the degree of redemptive violence that permeate all past and present Dispensationalist rhetoric (religious or fictional alike), one may easily argue that the cathartic violence inscribed in the means is fetishized to an extent that it becomes an end in itself. As Mark Juergensmeyer puts it, annihilating the unbelieving world is performed within a theological context that renders that violence and destructiveness into a source of spiritual nourishment, something per se 'holy'.¹²¹ The distinctive passion Dispensationalists show for the self-destroying and self-creating fire of the Apocalypse strikingly resonates with Lifton's idea of nuclearism - as detailed in the Appendix, humankind's deification and worship of the very agents of its potential annihilation, another immortality project set out to overcome our fear, frailty and biological finitude.¹²²

6.10 Jerusalem as a thermometer

At present, millions of US Christian Zionists utilize a geo-political imagination focusing almost entirely on modern Israel, with Iran and the Muslim world serving respectively as a specific and general 'antithetical other'.¹²³ By constantly interpolating current events with the Darby-inspired prophetic schemes, Dispensationalist magazine *Philadelphia Trumpet* sees the Holy City of Jerusalem equally as geographical pivot and barometer of the end of history. In the April 2009 online issue entitled 'Incredible Hope in a Hopeless World', columnist Brad McDonald summed up some previous 'worldwatch' forecasts to reach the following conclusion:

Passages in both the Old and New Testament show that Jerusalem is the centre around which world events orbit in the months and days leading up to the return of Jesus Christ. To those who understand this prophetic reality, Jerusalem is more than just another city blistered by chaos: It's a thermometer for measuring, and anticipating End Time events. Zechariah 14:1-2 is a seminal passage outlining the events in Jerusalem immediately preceding Jesus' return. His vision explains that immediately prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the entire city of Jerusalem 'shall be taken' by a conquering force. First, half of Jerusalem is taken, then the whole city is conquered. As Trumpet columnist Stephen Flurry wrote recently, 'What this prophecy indicates is that Iran, backed by a Hamas-dominated Palestinian insurgency, will take half the city of Jerusalem captive'. When half of Jerusalem falls', editor in chief Gerald Flurry wrote in March 2006, 'it starts a chain reaction of events - an avalanche of crises - that leads directly to Christ's Second Coming! Events in that city are the thermometer that measures how close we are to the most awesome event in human history: the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! We need to watch Jerusalem, this remarkable thermometer of End Time events, more closely than ever. Even now, events in that city indicate that the Messiah's return is imminent, and that the time rapidly

approaches when He will transform Jerusalem into exactly what its name means: a city of PEACE!¹²⁴

For Jerusalem to fulfil the Dispensationalist script and therefore become the Millenarian 'city of peace' in which Jesus Christ rules, the temperature must necessarily rise: the Israeli capital is expected to be 'blistered by chaos', persecuted to an unprecedented scale, and 'dripping with blood'.¹²⁵ In their public endorsements of the Zionist cause, US Evangelical churches and organizations invariably argue that the present perilous climate enjoins every Christian to pray for Israel and stand on her side, as the Jewish people have been 'targeted for genocide' by the Islamofascists. However, consistent with their premillennial hopes, many Christian Zionists are also remarkably happy to be standing on the brink of a nuclear Armageddon in which the earthly people, and not them, will partake. This seems to be implicitly confirmed by their innate tendency to celebrate events which most of Israelis would consider as calamitous. Amid US Dispensationalists, speculations about the rapture or other End Time 'joys' greatly increase following crises or outbreaks of violence in the Middle East involving the Zionist state. On July 21st, 2006, for example, as soon as the missiles started to be launched against Israel by Hezbollah or Hamas, prominent Evangelical and Republican broadcaster Janet Parshall brimmed with glee: 'these are the times we have been waiting for. This is straight out of our Sunday Bible School lessons. We are on the edge of eternity'.¹²⁶ On a similar note, in his 2006 bestseller *Jerusalem Countdown: A Warning to the World*, Evangelical pastor John Hagee saw the events unfolding in the Middle East as confirming the Dispensationalist script about the imminence of 'Ezekiel War' - the first climatic confrontation between God's forces and the Antichrist's armies, which will precipitate the downward spiral of events leading to Christ's second advent.¹²⁷ That in the last years the Iranian Islamic Republic has been actively enriching uranium would be another unmistakable sign that the world is very close to the tribulation years heralding the Millennium. An atomic showdown with President Ahmadinejad being inevitable because foretold in the Book of Jeremiah, argues Hagee, Israel and America should not wait too long and pre-emptively strike Iran.¹²⁸ Nonetheless, confronting Iran's nuclear capability programme in the terms the pastor suggests would not represent a Clausewitzian 'continuation of politics by other means', but rather a way to light the Dispensationalist Apocalypse using the Israeli state and the Jews living it as a 'match'.¹²⁹

6.11 Utopian peace

Given its profound anti-historical charge, the Eschatology of US Evangelical Zionism seems to share more affinities with the zealous dissenters at the margins of the national-religious panorama, rather than with its mainstream. Akin to Christian Zionism, both Etzion's post-theocratic Zionism and Kahanism embrace a catastrophic form of Messianism in which final fulfilment can only be obtained through a violent cataclysm uprooting the current aeon.¹³⁰ This theological stand could not contrast more with the naturalistic reading of redemption that instead dictates mainstream Gush Emunim's political involvement. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the Cabbalist lore upon which Kookism is based values history as a channel for Jewish salvation. The intra-mundane task of cosmic restoration is pursued asymptotically and with the aid of the secular state, by settling the national-religious cause in the Land and in the heart of the Israelis. Accordingly, the current dispensation cannot be suddenly abolished by an Apocalyptic outbreak because soteriological meaning is continuously extracted from its course.

Nonetheless, there seems to be one point in which all these three very different redemptive projects converge. US Christian Zionism, Gush Emunim, and its radical fringes posit a state of peace in Eretz Ysrael as a final and utopian ideal, a concept that is utterly indifferent to the conventional rules of political-diplomatic praxis. To US Evangelicals the dialectic between violent Armageddon and the Millenarian bliss eschews any possibility for negotiation between the parts. No peace in the Middle East can be realized or even thought of until and unless the Second Coming is reached catastrophically. Therefore, any effort to settle the Israeli-Palestinian dispute in the present dispensation is 'at best a lack of faith or at worst a rebellious defiance towards God's pre-defined plans'.¹³¹ Given the cosmic scale of the Manichean opposition, 'the articulation and adjudication of differences' can only be advanced by means of 'an all-or-nothing' Eschatological confrontation.¹³² It is written in the Bible that pacifism prior to that final victory is nothing but trafficking with the Antichrist. Etzion's and Kahane's worldviews function on similar premises. As far as their theologies of permanent warfare are concerned, no appeasement is deemed possible with the ontologically evil and impure goyim, but only their utter defeat and obliteration. Peace is a Messianic goal that can be achieved solely by purging Eretz Ysrael from its corrupting agents. Despite its more gradualist approach to redemption, mainstream Gush Emunim espouses a no less radical

stand. After the signing of the Camp David Accords, Rabbi Ariel protested that 'the true peace for which we aim and to which we must educate [our people] is that based on the unification of the human race around one Torah'.¹³³ The etymological affinity between the Hebrew words 'shalom' (peace) and 'shlemut' (wholeness, perfection, something which is undivided and free of defects) sheds a light on the Religious Zionist disposition towards a diplomatic agreement with the Arabs world.¹³⁴ Even for the least antinomian amongst these three movements, the utopian nature of the goal determines the loss of any room for political manoeuvring. Ravitzky observes that in so much as there can be no Jewish return to Eretz Ysrael except a complete return,

there can be no Jewish notion of peace except a perfect peace. Peace is no longer merely a contingent political concept, attainable in the course of history, but an a-historical one, the peace of the End of Days prophesied by Isaiah and Micah. 'True peace' must be based on utter harmony, love, and [Jewish] brotherhood, not just on a balance of forces that keeps conflicting interests in check. [In this sense,] many of the younger Kook's disciples, the leadership of Gush Emunim, saw the peace agreement with Egypt as a betrayal, not only of the ideal of the integrity of the Land of Israel, but also of the integrity of the Jewish idea of peace. The elevation of an idea to utopian status prevents it from being realized, even partially, in the here and now. If peace is understood in exclusively Messianic terms, political activity aimed at achieving it is, in effect, neutralized - even if that means leaving the field of history to the forces of war. For Messianic perfection knows no compromise.¹³⁵

In keeping with these theo-political *Weltanschauung*, decision-making about the future of Eretz Ysrael should not take the Gentiles' side into any account. As Aran puts it, peace represents a solipsistic Jewish orientation toward the sacred, 'something between the chosen nation and its God, between Israel and the Torah – and not a complex web of diplomatic or strategic relations between communities and states'.¹³⁶ Once interpreted as a Messianic-Millenarian state of perfection, homeostasis and uniformity, peace becomes nothing but a zero sum game. Although in the minds of Jewish and Evangelical believers such a totalistic concept looms ahead, in guise of a futuristic stage to be fully realized only at the End Time, the methods of its implementation are already indiscriminate and uncompromising during the present age.

6.12 Giving up on the world

Mainline Reformed, Orthodox, and Catholic denominations, and sometimes more progressive forms of US Evangelicalism, often criticize Dispensationalism as a belief system in which Ecclesiology and Christology are subordinated to an exclusionary and violent Eschatology.¹³⁷ This subordination would negatively

impinge on a proper understanding of Christian ethics along with their social application. Conversely, those Evangelical, charismatic, Pentecostal, and independent Bible churches which endorse Darbyite premillennialism often see mainline Christian denominations 'with hostility and have at times understood the World Council of Churches and related bodies to be tools of the Antichrist'.¹³⁸ The nature of this stark opposition reflects, to a significant extent, the way in which the two theological orientations understand and approach the current historical dispensation: the former as a channel for social reform motivated by Christ's teachings as codified by institutionalized churches; the latter as entirely pervaded by evil and therefore only worthy of obliteration.¹³⁹

This anti-historical posture is also reflected in how Dispensationalists interpret their Messiah. For Boyer and many other critics, the kind of Christological figure US premillennialists celebrate and wait for would be an appalling departure from the 'lowly' Jesus of Nazareth - the defeated and suffering Messiah whose message of unconditional love, non-violent resistance and forgiveness is located by mainstream Christianity in the synoptic Gospels.¹⁴⁰ Within the framework Darby set for millions of US Evangelicals, Jesus is rather the victorious Lamb riding on a white steed with his eyes flaming fire, which is instead described in Revelation's final chapters. According to Darby's acolytes, this End Time warrior-king will avenge the world's accumulated injustices with a sharp sword, smite the heathen nations, rule upon them with the rod of iron, carry out selective judgement and exclusive salvation, and abolish history with a Jewish Millenarian kingdom centred on Jerusalem. In this sense, Dispensationalism reprises to the highest degree the Combat Myth inscribed in the Davidic Messianic tradition, whilst downplaying or rejecting all together the inclusive and atoning meaning associated with the Cross – a meaning that, as far as many New Testament theologians are concerned, is supposed to unravel and have impact intra-historically and in the current aeon.

As central to the divine plan, mainstream Christianity presents that Jesus consciously faced martyrdom to wash humankind's sins away. Further, the Golgotha inaugurated the coming Kingdom of God, which is based on the Church's earthly working inspired by Jesus' teachings. Being placed in the world and finding solutions to the deep problems that confront humankind would be, accordingly, the primary tasks every Christian has to face. In contrast, Dispensationalists interpret the crucifixion mainly as a symbol of failure, which marks

the postponement of the intended Kingdom, which will only be made manifest when Jesus returns as the Davidic king, exercising precisely the form of political power [many Christians] claim Jesus rejected. [In mainstream Churches,] Jesus is worshiped and glorified because he was slain, and it is in his suffering to the point of death that we find the meaning of human history. In Dispensationalism, we will not see [the real] Jesus in His glory until he returns as a conquering warrior and theocratic ruler. Ultimate meaning is located in the future fulfilment of promises to the nation of Israel.¹⁴¹

Considering these stark differences in terms of Christology, the mundane engagement mainline churches often promote becomes in Dispensational theology a mere 'second order program, entirely subservient to God's dealings with Israel'.¹⁴² Today, millions of US Evangelical Zionists are keeping faith to this peculiar anti-historical stand when they argue that the only kind of social-political action the heavenly people can subscribe to is restoring more exiles to Eretz Ysrael, broadening the Jewish control over the Land, and strengthening Israel's military prowess in sight of a nuclear Armageddon with Iran. Ironically, these Evangelicals act in this world, but only with the purpose to expedite its final demise.¹⁴³ With his famous 'lifeboat' metaphor, Chicago premillennialist Dwight L. Moody made crystal clear that the real goal is not to improve present reality - as a postmillennialist might argue, but to selectively 'snatch' people out of it:

I look on this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat, and said to me, 'Moody save all you can'. God will come in judgement and burn up this world, but the children of God do not belong to this world; they are in it, but not of it, like a ship in the water. This world is getting darker and darker; its ruin is coming nearer. If you have friends on this wreck unsaved, you had better lose no time in getting them off.¹⁴⁴

Moody's 'flight from the world' encapsulates the source of the distinctive indifference or hostility US Dispensationalists display toward civic, political, and cultural responsibilities other than their blind commitment to the Zionist cause. In essence, premillennialism is about liberating believers from their enslavement to history, setting them free from the burden of Kronos suddenly and violently. This faith is set on the destruction of everything that man has become as a historical being. It is only by degrading mundane reality that Dispensationalists can achieve their union with the sacred. Quite telling is their attitude towards environmental conservation and not renewable natural resources. Given that biblical prophecies tell us that only a few generations are left before Armageddon, it would be morally justified to '(ab)use the world as we will soon lose it'.¹⁴⁵

6.13 Participatory shift

Until the first half of the last century, the idea that the End could be proactively forced, let alone by political means, had only just a few proponents within US Dispensationalist circles.¹⁴⁶ Although conscious to be living at the close of history, the vast majority of Evangelical Zionists believed that only God could move the hands of the prophetic clock. They consequently shunned earthly involvement, remaining nevertheless watchful and spiritually prepared. According to Timothy Weber, it took two key historical occurrences to galvanize Dispensationalists out of their passivity, and render them into active players in the political arena: the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948, and its territorial expansion following the Six Day War in June 1967.¹⁴⁷ Weber compares the early Dispensationalists to spectators in a stadium's stands, who watched history unfolding down below, on the playing field. Only few of them believed they could or actually should expedite Darby's prophetic timetable. Once the Millenarian ideal of a third Jewish Commonwealth seemed to have been translated into a modern state, which later expanded its territory threefold almost to meet the Biblical boundaries of Eretz Ysrael, a profound shift took place in the Dispensationalist mind and predisposition towards history: 'no longer content to be observers only, US Christian Zionists descended to the playing field and became important participants in the world they were sure was rapidly passing away'.¹⁴⁸ Millions of Evangelicals started implementing 'politically' their End Time hopes, with the confidence that the re-appearance of the greatest Jew of all the time, the Lord Jesus Christ, was imminent.

Similar to the Religious Zionist case, one might observe a mutual creative tension between Millenarian ideals and empirical reality, which also functions as a remarkable catalyst for theo-political mobilization. It is important to stress that, although their redemptive modes and goals vastly differ, Christian Zionism and Gush Emunim read the same mundane events – the founding of the Zionist State and, twenty years later, the Jewish recapture of East Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria in the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights - as indisputable validations of the Covenantal promises to Israel.¹⁴⁹ In both cases, not only did this miraculous alignment between religious ideal and historical reality confirm the 'beginning of the flowering of redemption', but also prompted believers into meaningful action in order to push the respective Messianic-Millenarian processes forward, towards their finalisation.

As far as US Dispensationalists are concerned, this convergence was so overwhelming that it significantly altered the original application of their premillennial faith. Notwithstanding the world was deemed irreparably doomed and the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Jewish restoration were believed to come to pass regardless, it became critical for many in the Bible Belt to reconsider their traditional indifference towards the current aeon. On a deeper level of analysis, the motive instantiating this participatory shift might be essentially twofold. First, as Ravitsky would describe it, Dispensationalists were for the first time lured into a substantial earthly commitment on the assumption of having been singled out for the highest purpose in life. The overconfidence about the redemptive spin history had taken gave them the impression of being almost in exclusive partnership with God. This compelled them to assume a purposive role in that cosmic drama they believed to be unfolding in the Middle East. Second, to a significant extent, their theo-political surge might also depend upon the typically Dispensationalist sense of impending End, but without a fixed date – a sense which the events of May 1948 and June 1967 further emboldened in the mind of countless End Time believers. On the subject of setting a date for the Apocalypse, O’Leary charges that ‘greater specificity may turn [premillennial] audiences into passive spectators awaiting the fall of the final curtain on history’, whereas indeterminacy would open up a more fluid prophetic timetable which may encourage the same audience to participate as protagonist in that ‘dramatic finale’.¹⁵⁰ Otherwise put, the two decisive turning points taking place in a twenty year span inaugurated for those who lived in the shadow of the Second Coming a ‘transitional phase’: as previously argued, the Apocalyptic impression of standing on the cusp of two qualitatively different ages, in this case, history and eternity.¹⁵¹ Rather than putting brackets around thoughts and actions, this sense of imminence and liminality would spur believers in forcing a closure, and therefore complete their transition into the new, perfected and blissful Millenarian age.

Weber makes crystal clear that, being multiple the responses which can stem from the same Eschatological orientation, there has never been or will ever be such a thing as a typical or uniform premillennial style of political engagement. However, following Jonathan Butler’s analytical categories, Weber locates the Evangelical Zionist approach towards mundane reality into the ‘political-prophetic’ typology:

Instead of abandoning the social order or manoeuvring on the fringes, some premillennialists assume political and social responsibility. Naturally, their participation in politics is highly discriminatory. Premillennialists are very selective about what they become involved in. Their approach tends to be individualistic, moralistic, and short-term. That is, they usually refuse to get involved in long-term projects for social transformation. They know that they cannot change things permanently. But they believe that there are some things that they can do. Therefore, many premillennialists decide to give the Devil 'all the trouble [they] can till Jesus comes.'¹⁵²

In view of their focus on assisting the Jewish return to and control over Eretz Ysrael in order to precipitate the Second Coming, the Christian Zionist involvement with the defiling world would be distinctively short-termed and highly discriminatory. Believers are also called to enter the domain of public life with the main purpose to bring US domestic and foreign policies in line with Darby's master plot. Nonetheless, Washington's halls of power must be lobbied only until Jesus Christ secretly evacuates His people through the rapture 'airlift'. After that event the current dispensation is lost in the darkness of disinterest since it must collapse in the final Apocalyptic ordeal. The paradox consists in the fact that, in keeping with their Dispensational Eschatology, US Evangelicals are impelled to operate resourcefully and purposively within history, but only to advance the already foreordained plan to violently abolish its course.

6.14 The politics of the Apocalypse

The awakening of US Christian Fundamentalism as a major force to be reckoned with began in early 1970s.¹⁵³ Whilst mainstream Protestant and Roman Catholic denominations witnessed a steep decline, conservative Evangelicalism rose in terms of membership, financial assets and missionary activities, becoming the fastest developing sector of American Christianity.¹⁵⁴ As the Historian Paul Boyer notes, the drive for such a remarkable growth was Darby's premillennial doctrine, now popularized through the modern media of mass communication. With their televised sermons reaching millions of viewers, charismatic evangelist Gerry Falwell and Pat Roberson started preaching their doomsday gospel focusing on modern Israel to large audiences. During the same period, Hal Lindsey's great publishing phenomenon, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, rendered the obscure passages of Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation into an intelligible script that readers could use to put current affairs into the right prophetic perspective.¹⁵⁵ Further, the Dallas Theological Seminary established itself as the academic and ideological 'Vatican' of premillennial

Dispensationalism, also becoming one of the most prestigious training grounds for Evangelical clergy and laity, both in the country and around the world.¹⁵⁶

Not only did Dispensationalism enter with confidence into US public life and popular culture, but it also encroached into the domain of domestic and international politics. Since the early 1980s, Evangelical Dispensationalist leaders forged alliances with American Jewish pressure groups and Israeli politicians in favour of the Zionist cause. Relying on grassroots networks able to reach and mobilize millions, the Christian Right also began to wield considerable influence as a key voting block for the Republican Party, trying to put in office only candidates with views and programmes in line with their Eschatological agenda focused on Israel.¹⁵⁷

An impressive corpus of literature has been published about George W. Bush's spiritual orientations and the strategic ties he maintained with the conservative Evangelical circles prior to and throughout his two mandates at the White House. As Emilio Gentile reports in his essay about US civil religion in the wake of 9/11, countless scholarly assessments of George W. Bush and his presidency have been built through scanning his religious beliefs and questioning their sincerity. At stake was judging whether the unusual Messianic tones of this presidency represented an aberration from the course of the American tradition or a marked expression of its very essence. Two main categorizations often emerged. Bush was labelled either as a 'sanctimonious' president held hostage by the Evangelical Right; or as a 'mediocre but astute politician, who dressed up a cynical and unscrupulous political line in religious clothes, aiming solely at fostering the interests of the pressure groups that had financed his electoral campaign'.¹⁵⁸ As Gentile points out, discerning between the two realms might be an inconclusive exercise, especially if one considers the impact 9/11 produced on the processes of sacralization of politics and politicization of religion. Indeed, as a result of the traumatic attacks and the ensuing 'holy crusade' mentality, the two dimensions seemed to intermingle to the point of almost losing their respective boundaries - be it within the Bush administration or in other national contexts.¹⁵⁹

Another disputed issue concerns the Dispensationalist leanings of Bush. Although it is probably impossible to ascertain the extent to which the president, himself a born-again Christian, embraced or sympathized with such a prophetic creed, it is indisputable that he constantly courted Evangelical audiences in which Christian Zionist leaders and believers prominently featured.¹⁶⁰ The latter, on their part, hailed Mr Bush's arrival at the White House

as the beginning of a spiritual revival that would have brought God right back to national politics. Especially when compared to the scandalous conduct of his predecessor, Bush's religious and moral credentials made him into that righteous leader many Evangelicals so eagerly awaited in order to regenerate America, taking it back to its original principles as 'Christian nation'. They thought God directly answered their wishes after they knew that the new president had set Bible study groups in the White House and introduced the almost unprecedented custom to open every single government meeting with a prayer.¹⁶¹

According to reliable sources such as those of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, Evangelical votes turned out to be key in both 2000 and 2004 presidential elections.¹⁶² It is therefore plausible to assume that for Bush, or any other politician in his entourage, it would have been almost impossible to ignore the demands stemming from this segment of religious voters – in particular, those concerning the modern state of Israel. It is well known that, as his presidency was reaching its conclusion, Bush attempted to leave a footnote in history by championing 'the expansion of freedom and peace in the Holy Land'.¹⁶³ A Bill Moyers' special report on the 2007 Annapolis peace talks gave a very simple but nonetheless poignant representation of the kind of impasse in which Bush's foreign policy had been constantly caught. The narrating voice opens the report by explaining that during that event two opposite dynamics were colliding against each other in the same centre of power, but at different level of political negotiations. As Bush officially discussed a two-state solution with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian authority President Mahmoud Abbas at the White House, down below, in the lobbies, his National Security Advisor was trying to placate some Evangelical representatives who saw in the same diplomatic solution a 'lynching' of the Jewish state.¹⁶⁴

Many contend that President Carter, Clinton and even President George H. W. Bush Senior tended to be more vocal in their criticism against Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories, whereas both Bush administrations lent such activities an almost tacit approval.¹⁶⁵ Nearly every study denouncing the political remit US Evangelical Zionism acquired during the Bush era quotes the 'Jenin incident' to back the claim that the Bible Belt's lobbying in Washington represented a 'safety net' for Israel's unilateral policies in the occupied territories. In March 2002, in response to the Netanyahu suicide attack sadly known as the 'Passover massacre', Prime Minister Sharon launched Operation Defensive Shield, with the primary goal of dismantling the Arab

terrorist network in the West bank, and thereby preventing further suicide bombings against Israeli civilians. During the siege of the Northern town of Jenin, 23 IDF soldiers were killed in the fighting, along with 53 Palestinian casualties, a disputed number of which were civilians. In view of the fact that it was considered the hotbed of Palestinian militancy, a refugee camp located in the proximities of the town was extensively targeted by the operation, with the IDF also keeping the Red Cross and other humanitarian aid organizations from intervening for thirteen days. The ensuing international outcry led to a UN resolution demanding Israel to withdraw from the West Bank 'without delay'. That president Bush eventually sided with the Security Council, and therefore asked a defiant Sharon to immediately pullout from the Palestinian areas, angered and at the same time mobilized a key component of his electoral base. Apart from a Washington 'joint rally' allegedly attended by over 100,000 Evangelicals, American and Israeli Jews, and other pro-Israel supporters, Wagner reports that

prominent Christian Zionist leaders, working closely with pro-Israel groups in Washington, used their media and internet outlets to mobilize their constituencies to deliver tens of thousands of telephone calls, e-mails and letters to the President, telling him to refrain from pressuring Sharon and to allow Israel to finish its job [the elimination of the terrorist cells and infrastructures from the West Bank territories]. In the aftermath of that campaign, Bush did not utter another word of opposition to Israeli military actions. Falwell told the CBS news program 60 Minutes that after the incident, Israel could count on Bush to 'do the right thing for Israel every time'. The lesson was that even when the Bush administration criticized Israel, the Israelis, conscious of the extensive support they enjoy in the US Congress, would not take it seriously.¹⁶⁶

In his seminal study on American nationalism published in the wake of the Iraq war, Anatol Lieven submits that a substantial pro-Israeli twist in the US Middle East policy coincided with a process of 'southernization' of the Republican Party. Such a process, adds Lieven, began with Bush's first election and reached its apex in 2004, at a moment in which the 'White South' (a shorthand for the conservative Evangelical constituency steeped in Darbite premillennialism) was overrepresented both in the Congress and in the Senate.¹⁶⁷ Lieven, together with many other concerned voices, warned that the Christian Right's hold on Washington not only was putting at risk the constitutional separation between church and state, but it also represented the major cause for a regressive form of 'chauvinist nationalism' and, at the same time, of an increased commitment towards Israel's most irredentist policies in the occupied territories. Lieven dedicates an entire chapter of his study [Chapter Six: 'American Nationalism, Israel and the Middle East'] to address

this convergence between Israeli and American foreign policies in the aftermath of September 11, emphasizing their mutual unilateralism as being utterly opposed to the approach of the international community on the Middle East. The LSE political scientist also underscores how such an alliance based on Fundamentalist and ultra-nationalist impulses acting against the Palestinian national aspirations turned out to be a ‘calamitous liability’ – namely, because the ‘love affair’ between neo-cons, Evangelicals and Israeli right-wing Zionists alienated many moderate voices within Muslim societies, whilst proving remarkably fruitful to radical Islam in terms of propaganda and recruitment.¹⁶⁸

That during the Bush era Dispensationalist leanings had conspicuously spilled into mainstream US politics was epitomized by an official speech James Inhofe gave at Capitol Hill as early as March 2002. In that circumstance, the prominent Republican Senator and New Christian Right member clarified the main motive why Israel should continue to settle in the West Bank:

because God said so. This is the most important reason. Look it up in the Book of Genesis. It is right up there on the desk (...) The Bible says that Abraham removed his tent and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built an altar before the Lord. Hebron is in the West Bank. It is the place where God appeared to Abraham and said ‘I am giving you this land’ - the West Bank. This is not a political battle at all. It is a contest over whether the word of God is true.¹⁶⁹

Another calculated Dispensationalist effort put in place to win hearts and minds to the cause of the Jewish State is the so-called ‘Tour Bus Diplomacy’. Under the pretext of guiding US Evangelicals around the sites where Darby’s prophecies were said to come true, this initiative brought and continues to bring millions of visitors to the Holy Land, generating substantial revenues for the Israeli economy.¹⁷⁰ In such prophecy-based itineraries, little is usually mentioned about the life and teaching of Jesus, but much more about the divine right granted to the Jewish State in its struggle against the ‘demonic’ Palestinians.¹⁷¹ Restorationism remains however a key earthly commitment to move the prophetic clock forward. Since their political activation, Christian Zionist churches and congregation have been engaged in a twofold task. On the one hand, they provide financial aid to the existing Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. In a way strikingly reminiscent of the indulgences system fully operating in pre-Reformation Roman Catholicism, US Evangelicals can secure quotas of eternity by signing into a distance adoption of a Jewish community living in Eretz Ysrael. On the other, they economically and logistically assist those Diaspora Jews willing to make ‘aliyah’ (return) to Judea

and Samaria.¹⁷² These twin initiatives are directed at consolidating and increasing Jewish demographics in the West Bank, and therefore make an eventual Israeli disengagement from it more difficult or even impossible. Despite having being at odds for two thousand years, observes Shalom Goldman, Jewish Messianism and Christian Millenarianism have especially in the last few decades begun to converge. The core of this most unexpected, previously inconceivable and wide-ranging theo-political alliance consists in the shared effort to establish facts on the ground aimed at overturning territorial partition of Eretz Ysrael and, in that manner, furthering the respective redemptive vision.¹⁷³

It is worth noting that the real catalyst for this symbiotic partnership was, more than the Six-Day War, the *mahapach*: that political revolution originating from the destabilizing setback of the Yom Kippur war which put an end to the Labor Party's three decades hegemony to inaugurate the era of Jabotinskyian-Revisionist Zionism. As Colin Shindler puts it, May 17th 1977, the day Menachem Begin obtained a landslide victory at the Knesset elections, represented a crossroads not only for Gush Emunim but also for US Evangelical Dispensationalism.¹⁷⁴ For the first time, these two newly emergent Messianic-Millenarian movements could rely on a secular platform sympathetic with their land-hungry expansionist policies.¹⁷⁵ Despite some initial frictions caused by Begin's decision to return all Sinai to Egypt in 1982, a honeymoon between the Likud Party and the Bible Belt continued unblemished until the summer of 2005, when Sharon government bowed to the Arab demographic realities of the region and decided to unilaterally pull out from Gaza.¹⁷⁶ Shindler submits that US Christian Zionism found in the Likud's maximalist policies a conduit for their aspirations toward the End Times and Armageddon, whereas the Israeli secular right discovered in US Dispensationalists unwavering supporters, numerically stronger and far more dependable than the traditionally liberal and overtly dovish members of American Jewry.¹⁷⁷ From the early 1980s onwards, Likud premiers strategically utilized Evangelical Zionists to either pressurize the White House or to counteract criticism against Israel's settlement policies stemming from both American progressive Christianity and Reformed Judaism.¹⁷⁸

At present the rising star within the New Christian Right panorama is the already mentioned pastor Hagee: the spiritual leader of San Antonio Cornerstone congregation, a non-denominational Evangelical 'mega church' that declares to gather more than 19, 000 under its roof. In addition, the pastor

boasts a television and radio audience of 99 million homes.¹⁷⁹ In 2006, Hagee launched the non-profit group CUFI (Christian United for Israel), with the purpose to teach Evangelicals the 'language of Washington DC', and coordinate their lobbying effort to keep the US foreign policy constantly pro-Zionist. Superseding traditional organizations like Fallwel's Moral Majority or Robertson's Christian Coalition, CUFI has recently become the new dynamic reality of US Conservative Evangelicalism. It claims '426,000 active members, 40 events per month, a growing network on college campuses, and Hispanic and African American outreach'.¹⁸⁰ Its annually organized summit 'A Night to Honour Israel' has been attended over the last 5 years by such influential American and Israeli figures as Joseph Lieberman, John McCain, Dore Gold, Abe Foxman, Benjamin Netanyahu, Shimon Peres, and Elie Wiesel. The 2006 kick-off event also received formal words of support from the ex-President Bush and his wife. To date, CUFI and John Hagee's other ministries have raised 58 million dollars for the Zionist cause.¹⁸¹

6.15 Pastor Hagee's two hats

The moment Dispensationalist leaders decided to embark in politics, rhetorical skills and stratagems were to be developed to accommodate two almost irreconcilable demands. On the one hand, their political approach and praxis had to acknowledge and to some extent satisfy the longings for an Apocalyptic dénouement stemming from their religious constituencies; on the other, in order to present themselves as credible political players, Dispensationalist leaders needed to allay scepticism, concern or embarrassment that those very longings generated amid either political opponents or potential partners. This conundrum became fully apparent when televangelist Pat Robertson decided to run for president in the late 1980s. To avoid the polemic that his longstanding Armageddon advocacy was likely to raise, Robertson had to significantly redefine his theological trajectory from pure premillennial Dispensationalism towards 'nebulous' postmillennialism.¹⁸² In a study entirely dedicated to a rhetorical analysis of Robertson's public speeches during that period, O'Leary argues that the televangelist moved away from or at least downplayed the catastrophic scenarios distinguishing his premillennial faith, to embrace a more optimistic vision in which transcendental fulfilment was pursued intra-historically through gradual reform of the American society, both in moral and material terms.¹⁸³ However, such a reshuffle eschewing the

destructive side of the Apocalypse with the idea of human perfectibility – that is, the argument that the *Eschaton* could be approached asymptotically - failed in convincing two ‘crucial audiences’. Conservative Evangelicals denounced the shift in religious rhetoric as ‘a heretical embrace of secular humanism and postmillennialism’, whereas political opponents and media commentators alike labelled the disavowal of Armageddon theology as disingenuous opportunism. This twin reaction determined Robertson’s political marginalization and, ultimately, his defeat at the primaries.¹⁸⁴

Although he never considered running for the White House, pastor Hagee is today confronted by a similar predicament. At every attempt to broaden CUFI’s appeal and acceptance within US national domain, Hagee must face the daunting task to strike the exact balance between the marked Apocalyptic charge of his Dispensational faith and the rules of mainstream politics. In order to overcome this impasse, Hagee strategically recurs to a ‘double standard’ approach, affording the pastor to modulate his message in accordance with the identity and inclinations of its recipients.

Whenever he intervenes in the public arena, Hagee tends to ‘whitewash’ his doomsday register and lexicon. He accordingly purports his Zionist commitment in less Eschatological than geopolitical and cultural terms. Israel and the Jewish people who live within and beyond its borders matter not as a vehicle of Christian deliverance from the world, but in view of the crucial values and common spiritual heritage they share with the United States. Supporting the Zionist state, along with its maximalist policies in the West Bank, would be the best manner to foster democratic progress in that region. Since its national foundation, Israel has been the ‘canary in the coalmine’, ‘the scout’ in that conflict opposing Western civilization to ‘a new onslaught of hatred stemming from the Islamofascists’.¹⁸⁵ Further, another salient non-Eschatological reason Evangelicals often quote publically to justify their political stand consists in the guilt for ongoing centuries of anti-Jewish prejudice, persecution and oppression, which several Christian churches - namely European - tolerated or even supported.¹⁸⁶ If theological issues were to become pertinent whilst Hagee speaks to the outer world, the pastor would vehemently reject the view that Evangelical love and dedication to Israel is embedded in End Time speculations, emphasizing that it rather stems from Christian observance to the Covenantal promises as recounted in Genesis. These arguments notwithstanding, Darbite Eschatology appears to remain the elephant in the room, the nettlesome issue US Christian Zionists are always

reminded of and uncomfortable to account for. For instance, after reporter Max Blumenthal raised the alleged Dispensationalist leanings of his organization during a 2007 press conference, an annoyed Hagee stormed out that 'our support of Israel has absolutely nothing to do with End Time prophecy'. Blumenthal was immediately invited to leave the premises, escorted by CUFI's security personnel.¹⁸⁷

An entirely different approach is endorsed when the pastor addresses his religious congregation in the auditorium of Saint Antonio mega-church, during his televised sermons or in the pages of his End Time pamphlets. Here Hagee becomes a 'rethor' who persuades his audience by framing events through the lens of Darby's prophetic script.¹⁸⁸ In this more intimate setting, everything occurring on the historical horizon has a meaning which points towards the catastrophic finale: 'when you see what's happening in America and the world, it doesn't take long to realize that God is proclaiming through the voice of nature that we are approaching the coming of Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven'.¹⁸⁹ Following O'Leary's explanation about how the 'Apocalyptic persuasion' is rhetorically built within Dispensationalist circles, the rhetor would be a personality endowed with charisma whose discourse arouses and fulfils an End Time 'appetite' in the mind of his auditors by interpolating historical occurrences with Darby's predictive schemes. If the Apocalyptic persuasion is successfully construed, adds O'Leary, a virtuous bond is established between the rhetor, his audience and the prophetic script.¹⁹⁰ It is within this particular setting that Hagee feels at ease in justifying his support to the Zionist cause on fully Eschatological grounds. In this context, the pastor can read the signs of the time to confidently charge that the rising Arab turmoil engulfing Israel is nothing but the harbinger of a foreordained chain reaction leading to the Rapture, the Tribulation, the appearance of the Antichrist and his rule, the battle of Armageddon and the establishment of the Millenarian rule centred in Jerusalem - all topics which would be extremely indigestible to a non-Dispensationalist audience.

In keeping with these arguments, Sarah Posner, the associate editor of the online journal *Religion Dispatches*, and a major expert of the New Christian Right, notes that Hagee studiously wears 'two hats': one as a visible pro-Zionist activist whose support is courted by leading national and Israeli politicians; the other as a pastor of an Evangelical congregation which gathers millions of souls living in the shadow of the Second Coming.¹⁹¹ Straddling simultaneously two hardly compatible realms - mundane politics and anti-historical End Time

speculation – might nevertheless present the same pitfalls that caused Robertson’s fiasco. On the one hand, to over-accommodate towards the demands of the political game could put at risk the basis of Hagee’s religious consensus. In particular, compromising on key Eschatological principles might alienate those hardcore premillennialists who draw essential spiritual comfort from Apocalyptic rhetoric. This appears to be the case especially if one considers the most recent and fastest growing additions to US Dispensationalism: the Pentecostal and Charismatic streams, representing an aggressive ‘new breed’ of premillennialism which takes the doomsday narrative to its extreme, and it has also showed itself remarkably committed towards its implementation.¹⁹² Conversely, in view of the catastrophic predictions and scathing theodicy upon which they base their authority, Dispensational leaders will always find it difficult to present themselves as credible players within the public arena. In spite of the effort to conform to the accepted rules and codes of secular politics, their Armageddon theology calling for the violent annihilation of the world and the demonization of out-group opponents is bound to remain a liability for those who aspire to speak the language of Washington. This last assertion seems to have been once more validated during the past presidential campaigns, when Senator John McCain had to distance himself from CUFI and ultimately reject Hagee’s political endorsement as a result of a long list of outlandish jeremiads the pastor had previously uttered.¹⁹³ In late February 2008, he labelled the Catholic Church as a ‘great whore’ and a ‘false cult system’ playing a primary role in the Holocaust. The criticism already mounting on national scale was stirred even further when new derogatory statements surfaced – most notably, Hagee commenting that Katrina was nothing but a divine retribution for a gay pride parade planned in New Orleans for the week in which the hurricane took place.¹⁹⁴ Further, on September 18, 2005, during a sermon at his mega-church, the pastor linked one of the deadliest natural disasters in the history of the country to the Bush Administration’s decision to support Gaza pull out as a preliminary step towards a two-state solution as follows:

I want to ask Washington a question. Is there a connection between the 9,000 Jewish refugees being forcibly removed from their homes in the Gaza Strip now living in tents and the thousands of Americans who have been expelled from their homes by this tremendous work of nature? Is there a connection there? If you've got a better answer, I'd like to hear it.¹⁹⁵

Although not directly evoking an End Time scenario, it is undeniable that these controversial remarks are offspring from Hagee's Dispensationalist outlook. This goes to say that until and unless the Apocalyptic sting is completely removed, US Christian Zionism cannot affirm itself as a primary player in a democratic and pluralistic political system. Nonetheless, removing that sting might entail a 'theological death' for many of its adherents. Given its strong antinomianism and catastrophic stand, any political form of Dispensationalism will attach most of its fortunes to the state of exception, and always struggle to survive, let alone flourish beyond it. This represents a major difference with Gush Emunim, a movement whose naturalistic and intra-historical understanding of redemption makes political engagement comparatively easier.

One may object that extrapolations from only two case studies, Christian and Jewish Religious Zionism, proceed from far too narrow a base to support a general statement. Even so, an assumption can be at least put forward at this level of analysis: once established as a stable system of hierocratic authority, or after having obtained formal recognition within a given political system, religious movements with strong Apocalyptic-Messianic agendas tend to renegotiate their original catastrophic or revolutionary rationales. For a movement so concerned with otherworldly salvation such as US Christian Zionism, becoming deeply involved in electoral politics and foreign policy imposes a difficult revision of its theological worldview. However justified it might appear to achieve more political purchase and thereby press forward the Eschatological agenda, any process of mundane institutionalisation represents for a premillennial movement a doctrinal oxymoron. The 'middle-of-the-road position' between purely Apocalyptic beliefs and political ideology aimed at attaining intra-historical duration can hardly be located, let alone maintained. This contradiction in terms may as well produce profound repercussions in terms of membership. If core ideals of sudden and catastrophic palingenesis were to be sacrificed beyond recognition (in other words, diluted into the infinite postmillennial approximations towards the *Eschaton*), the group identity might be so seriously undermined to create the premises for internal crisis, secessions or even disbandment.

That political involvement tends to alter Eschatological beliefs, sometimes even to the extent of their complete transfiguration, represents a meaningful counterpoint to the other general assumption advanced in the course of this study that, with their call for absolute renewal, Eschatological beliefs impact on

political reality. As far as theo-political phenomena like Christian and Jewish Religious Zionism are concerned, the relationship between mundane reality and transcendental ideals is not given once and for all. The two dimensions seem to remain in a dialectic tension, constantly adjusting to each other over the course of time.

6.16 *Adversus Ioudaeos*

The traumatic experience of the Holocaust reintroduced with unprecedented urgency the question whether Christianity was, at its doctrinal core and from its historical beginnings, the primary source of Western anti-Semitism.¹⁹⁶ The mainstream of scholarship concentrated primarily on the so called *adversus Ioudaeos* tradition: as explained by Rosemary Ruether¹⁹⁷, a Christian self-understanding constructed in a fundamental opposition to Judaism, whether through repudiation of its supposed errors or by supersession of its virtues. We already argued that the Jewish ideal of a human fellowship set apart by divine election and thereby endowed with the mission to further universal salvation was a template that the emerging Church aimed to appropriate as its own. Ruether also contends that an approach ranging from anti-Jewish apologetic to overt anti-Semitism¹⁹⁸ was part and parcel of early Christianity's attempt to affirm and differentiate itself from Judaism, without however severing the roots with its essential spiritual moorings. In fact,

Judaism cannot be jettisoned entirely from the Christian worldview, lest the markers of Jesus' own identity lose their points of reference and the kingdom He proclaimed be emptied of its content. St. Augustine provided the category of 'witness people', arguing that the Jews are necessary for the continuation of Christian life until the *Eschaton*. Wrong as they are, the Jews in their very error serve the purposes of vindicating the Messianic prophecies that Jesus fulfils, exemplifying the contemporary consequences of rejecting God's grace, and validating the Second Coming by their acknowledgement of the one whom they have not previously recognized. The Jews may by definition be diametrically 'other' than what Christianity is, but they are the necessary other of Christianity's ongoing life.¹⁹⁹

Fenn submits that as 'the only nation on earth to have its history written in advance', Israel serves as a convenient 'mimetic double' for any social or religious congregation which lays claim to live at a crucial turning point in history or in a special dispensation of grace.²⁰⁰ Once interpreted in such a Girardian guise, Israel is bound to become at one and the same time a model of absolute perfection and a hated rival. It is therefore not surprising that the idea that Judaism and the Jews represent an ultimate yet necessary 'other' attains

full expression within Darby's speculations. In view of the obsessive casting of the tribes of Israel as foils in Christendom's march toward the Millennium, Dispensationalism and its adherents no doubt represent a theological *unicum*. In no other circumstance, argues historian Yaakov Ariel, 'has one religious community assigned a predominant role to another religious community in its vision of redemption or claimed that the other group holds a special relationship with God'; in no other case 'has one religious group invested so much hope in another group as the key brokers on the road to universal salvation'.²⁰¹ Nonetheless, whilst considering the Jewish people to be vital in God's plans for humanity, Dispensationalism does not translate only into philanthropic support for Zion. That some worrisome innuendos or even blatant statements constantly recur throughout past and present Evangelical discourses would rather suggest that what at first glance might appear as love and dedication is in reality a more ambivalent, if not self-contradictory feeling.²⁰² As Weber and Boyer well documented, along with their mass rallies honouring God's chosen nation with Hebrew singing and Israeli flag-waving, US Christian Zionists have always nurtured a 'dark side' in their attitude towards the beloved Children of God.²⁰³

Many Christian and Jewish detractors take issue with Darbite premillennialism arguing that the latter forces Judaism and the Jews into the service of the conservative Evangelical *Heilsgeschichte*. The Jewish people would be nothing more than 'pawns' in somebody else's Eschatological game.²⁰⁴ Although nominally rejecting replacement theology (as previously detailed, the idea that the Church rightfully became 'the new, true Israel, with no room left in God's Covenant for the old, benighted Israel'²⁰⁵), Christian Zionism remains strictly ingrained into a supersessionist logic, especially if one considers the ancillary role Darby earmarked for the earthly people. A quite remarkable analogy can be drawn between the Dispensationalist logic and the idea of hetero-genesis of the ends, as theorized by the elder Rabbi Kook. In so far as the forefather of Gush Emunim recognized in secular Zionism a mundane tool unwittingly pursuing the sacred cause of Messianic renaissance, Darby posited the earthly people as unknowing instruments of a divine process that, through their ingathering in Eretz Ysrael and final acceptance of Jesus, will bring about Christian salvation. Given this undeniable finality, Dispensationalism represents a controversial theology encroaching on any serious interfaith dialogue between Judaism and Christianity.

Despite remaining a distinct ethnic-religious entity alongside the heavenly Church, the Jews will eventually need to be subsumed within the worldwide fellowship of people who recognize Jesus as their saviour.²⁰⁶ Evangelical Zionism conceives both the Israeli and Diaspora Jews not as a self-standing religious community, but 'as a remnant of an ancient people who carry a special mission and are predestined to help bring the drama of Christian salvation to its conclusion'.²⁰⁷ In keeping with this view, Judaism cannot per se provide 'its adherents with spiritual comfort, moral guidelines, and, most important of all, salvation. Only in Christianity could Jews, as individuals, find eternal life and, as a nation, the peace and security they sought, as well as the fulfilment of their destiny as the chosen people'.²⁰⁸

It is not surprising that theologians who are well versed in both Eschatology and interreligious matters are those to be mostly concerned about the far-reaching implications of Darbite premillennialism. For instance, Peter A. Pettit, the director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding and an associate professor of religion, holds that the threat associated with Christian Zionism is essentially twofold. First, the apartheid separation between the earthly and heavenly people is bound to contrast the Jewish errors with the Christian truths. In so doing, the Dual Covenant approach would perpetuate or even exceed the shortcomings and dangers stemming from replacement theology. Second, interpreting Judaism as the 'left hand of Christology' remains an idealized form of Judaism, a Christian 'construction' which finds no resonance whatsoever within either the Israeli context or Diaspora Jewry.²⁰⁹ By taking its bearings more from the Eschatological needs of US Dispensationalism than from Jewish life and community, adds Pettit, this fetishized idea of Israel would 'indelibly mar any genuine relationship with Judaism - if not perhaps our very identity as Christians', and also add into 'the very sour substances of old Christian anti-Semitism'.²¹⁰

Rabbi J. Cook charges that anti-Semitic potentials are inscribed in the essence of Dispensational theology, in particular in the core belief that 'the onus for delay' in completing God's prophetic timetable rests upon His Chosen people.²¹¹ The love and dedication professed towards Zion do not prevent prominent Evangelical leaders from expressing impatience (or even contempt) toward those Jews who seem not to attend or even betray their End Time assignment. The feeling that what really counts is not the Jewish people's wellbeing but the Eschatological rationale they fulfil seems to have been proven by a number of controversial statements. In 2006, Pat Robertson suggested that

Ariel Sharon's descent into a comatose state was a divine punishment inflicted upon the Israeli Prime Minister for his policies undermining the integrity of Eretz Ysrael. Eleven years earlier, the televangelist addressed Yitzak Rabin's murder by an Israeli religious zealot in not too dissimilar terms than those endorsed by the Israeli Religious Right. As stated by Robertson, Rabin would have paid the toll for having contravened God's national-policy statement, as enshrined in Genesis.²¹²

In keeping with their prophetic hopes, US Dispensationalists seem to expect and even welcome a state of constant warfare engulfing the Zionist state. This represents another glaring contradiction if one considers the concern many Evangelical Zionists like Hagee boast today for Israel's national security. A similar course is followed whenever US Christian Zionism mobilizes its political assets in order to keep the US and Israeli government from making any diplomatic overtures towards the Palestinian authorities or the wider the Arab world which might stabilize the region. From a Dispensational standpoint, we argued, conflict opposing the chosen nation to its impure neighbours is the true and only harbinger of Millenarian peace. Escalating turmoil and violence in the Middle East is also conducive to the spiritual refinement of God's people, once the Christian faithful have already departed the earthly scene. One should never forget that, according to Darby's economy of salvation, the underlying purpose of the Tribulation period (otherwise known as Jacob's trouble) and of Armageddon itself is to condition a remnant of Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah in compensation for their ancestors' rejection of Him.²¹³ To appreciate the far-reaching consequences of premillennial Dispensationalism – especially from an interfaith dialogue perspective, it seems essential to take thoroughly into account what past and modern-day Evangelical Zionists have to say in regard to the Jews and their End Time fate.

Christian Zionists usually feel neither responsible nor accountable for the moral implications their belief system carries. Claiming it stems authoritatively from the Bible, they often invoke the principle of Jewish guilt for deicide, the long-standing 'corporate indictment' at the basis of every kind of Christian anti-Semitism.²¹⁴ Central to Darby's prophecies is the idea that Jesus offered the Kingdom of God to Israel and Himself as a Messiah, but the Jewish people discarded such an offer and crucified Jesus. As a result, we argued, the final fulfilment of God's promises to Israel had to be postponed and the Church's interim inaugurated. Since that moment, the Chosen are considered to be in a state of 'unbelief', that is, 'under a "national blood-guiltiness" for killing Christ,

a stigma that could not be wiped away until the Second Coming and the Jewish repentance for it'.²¹⁵ Being in unbelief is also the underlying justification Dispensationalists purport to frame pogroms and persecutions befalling the Jewish people: 'as a nation, the Jews crucified their king, therefore the nations will crucify them' until they repent for that fateful and sinful amiss.²¹⁶ The brutality and frequency through which they have been harassed over the centuries should make the Chosen realize the magnitude of their spiritual blindness.²¹⁷

Following the Dispensationalist plot, the Jewish refinement towards a Christian rebirth climaxes during the seven-year Tribulation. Although the End Time trials are meant to invest all sinners who missed the rapture window of opportunity (Jews and Gentiles alike who have been 'left behind'), Israel will be no doubt the 'focal point' of the coming wrath and judgement. Dreadful events loom ahead for the Jews according to Darby's calendar.²¹⁸ Previous disasters and persecutions would pale to insignificance if compared to the mass ordeal the chosen people will undergo whilst the Antichrist reigns on earth. Hitler's final solution, many Dispensationalists submit, was 'just a foretaste'.²¹⁹ Deriving such a prophetic claim from a reading of Zechariah 13:8, Darby charges that during Jacob's trouble the Antichrist will slaughter two-thirds of the Jews re-gathered in Palestine.²²⁰ This new and unparalleled Holocaust is nevertheless portrayed as 'a means to a good cause', as Israel's suffering would ultimately yield to her glorious 'Christian' destiny:

The Jacob's trouble will definitely be a part of Israel's sorrowful and tragic history (...). The unbelief and failures of Israel are pruned and punished through the unparalleled fires of the tribulation. The Jewish remnant entering the Millennium at the end of the Tribulation will thus have been purified for God's Kingdom.²²¹

It is worth noting that according to the Dispensationalist *Heilsgeschichte*, both forces of good and evil work in unison to draw the 'godly remnant' back to their original fold. Otherwise put, the astounding Jewish bloodbath the Antichrist unleashes during his reign is part of God's plan to redeem the Jews from their state of unbelief. As previously done during the entire course of history, God allows Satan's emissaries to be the rod of chastisement and correction upon His favourite but rebellious people. The Jews, Boyer observes, are thus confronted with the ultimate 'catch-22': regardless of their decision to recognize 'whom they pierced', in the last days supernatural and human forces must exterminate the Jews in ghastly numbers in order to bring the entire

cosmos to perfection.²²² In light of such a divine foreordination, Israel would never be able to escape her tragic fate. As many concerned voices point out, this represents the Eschatological bottom line that must be addressed by those American and Israeli Jews who seek to evaluate the nature of Evangelical Zionist support for Israel.

Considering what has been so far detailed, the End Time theology of US Evangelical Zionism appears clouded with paradoxes, logical inconsistencies and, foremost, ambivalence. Rachel Tabachnick - a major contributor to *Zeek*, an American journal of Jewish thought and culture - recently charged that, camouflaged in exuberant love and support for the Zionist cause, Hagee along with many other conservative Evangelicals overtly promote narratives paralleling the classic tropes and story lines of Western anti-Semitism - in particular, those in which Jewish people are portrayed not as ordinary people, but either as superhuman or subhuman beings. To Tabachnick, the 'net result' of the Evangelical obsession for Israel is 'stripping away the Jews' hard-won humanity'. This would represent the first step in that symbolic process that in so many historical circumstances led to 'unconcealed hatred, fear, and even genocide'.²²³ The pervasiveness of Biblical abstractions amid US Evangelicals is also confirmed by the widespread assumption that the glory of Israel is exclusively past and future. Quite tellingly, the impenitent Jews currently living in unbelief are often held as the major contributors to the moral and socio-political decline scourging the present age. A portrayal informed by the super- and sub-human binary finds a resonance in the words of Charles C. Cook, a prominent member of the Los Angeles Bible Institute. In an article published in the early 1930s with the title 'The international Jew', Cook wrote that

(...) the Jewish race is morally fully capable of doing all that is charged against it. It is at present rejected of God, and in a state of disobedience and rebellion. (...) As a race Jews are gifted far beyond all other peoples, and even in their ruin, with the curse of God on them, are in the front rank of achievement; but accompanying traits are pride, overbearing arrogance, inordinate love for material things, trickery, rudeness and egotism that taxes the superlatives of any language. Oppressed are they? Indeed, and subject to injustice more than any other race, and yet never learning the lesson of true humility. For the unregenerated Jew usually has a very unattractive personality. There is a reason for his being *persona non grata* at resorts and in the best society; who can deny it?²²⁴

It is quite telling that in the same article where he highlights the Jewish inherent duplicity, Cook also validates the authenticity of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the most influential piece of anti-Semitic literature in modern times. This early twentieth-century Russian forgery was purported to be the

secret proceedings of a Jewish internationalist plot to subjugate and overthrow the Western-Christian civilisation by disrupting its political-economic stability and undercutting its moral values.²²⁵ As Hanna Arendt shows in her seminal study *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in a short period of time the manuscript became key to any religious or secular ideology aiming at establishing a paranoid outlook against Jews. Because they offered indisputable evidence that the powerful and obnoxious Jews were masterminding a global conspiracy to turn the present order into a techno-capitalist dictatorship, the Russian fabrication became the most perfected weapon in the arsenal of Nazi propaganda.²²⁶ Since the 1930s onwards, explains Weber, the *Protocols* acquired momentum also within US Dispensationalist circles. The main reason of such an unexpected popularity was that those conspiracy theories seemed to perfectly fit the Darbite omen that ‘toward the end of the present age, civilization itself would hang in the balance and Jews would increasingly find themselves on centre stage in the cosmic drama’, and under the spell of the Antichrist.²²⁷ Despite adamantly condemning any manifestation of anti-Semitism, Evangelicals believed the Jewish ‘hidden hand’ to be more or less in all places. After having instigated the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the Jewish cabal was now scheming behind every communist upheaval or plotting. The ‘Illuminati conspiracy’ was seen as keeping the international and national banking system in check, and therefore to be simultaneously behind the curtain of the 1929 Wall Street collapse and President Roosevelt’s New Deal. Further, dictating the tone of Hollywood motion pictures production and the national press, the humanist and modernist Jews were also held accountable for the cultural decay in which the country had precipitated.²²⁸ That the powerful and cunning conspiracy had spread its tentacles almost everywhere was nevertheless an implicit confirmation that the final Apocalyptic *dénouement* was imminent. The Bible had predicted such a crisis just prior to Christ’s return (the world touching its lowest ebb before its regeneration), and many devoted Dispensationalists could properly frame the Jewish scheming that was behind it.²²⁹

After having fallen in disuse, the myth of a Jew-led plot regained currency during the 1990s, when Robertson started alleging that an elite network of international bankers – the Rothschilds, the firm of Kuhn, Jacob Schiff, Loeb, and the Warburgs – was operating through secret societies to undermine both the Christian values and the American liberties, with the purpose of taking undisputed control over the entire world. In the pages of his bestseller *The New*

World Order, the televangelist reiterated an updated version of the *Protocols* infamous template by arguing that the sinister plan for Jewish global domination would be nothing but the gateway for that final confrontation between good and evil bringing history to a close.²³⁰ More recently, a similar paranoia was embraced by Hagee, with his internationally broadcast sermons stating that 'our economic destiny is controlled by the Federal Reserve system that is now headed by Alan Greenspan [and] a group of class A stockholders, including the Rothschilds'.²³¹

In the last thirty years, the Evangelical allusions to the conspiratorial nature of world Jewry together with the warnings that Auschwitz was just a 'prelude' to what will happen prior to the Millennium made no impression whatsoever on the leadership of the Likud Party. Quite the opposite, Likud continues to fortify its traditional ties with US Dispensationalists, in a bid to maintain 'a Congressional bulwark' against any Presidential move against the settlement enterprise in the occupied territories. The benefits stemming from US Evangelical Zionism seem to outweigh its anti-Semitic proclivities even for many Diaspora sensibilities. It is safe to assume that belittling the Apocalyptic tropes of Dispensationalism remains therefore an almost default choice not only for those Evangelical leaders like Hagee who acquired prominence on the national and international stage, but also for any individual Jew or Jewish institution accepting political or financial support from that religious constituency. In this sense, David Brog - an American Jew, a committed Zionist and more recently the executive director of CUFI - espouses the usual argumentative line informed by non-Eschatological motives. To him, there is no doubt that a genuine philo-Semitism is bred in the marrow of Hagee's organization. Evangelical Zionists would represent the 'theological heirs' of the righteous Gentiles who saved many Jews during the Holocaust. He also believes that such Christians share with many American and Israeli Jews the same love for freedom and democracy and, accordingly, the same understanding of the war on Islamic terror - a war that would make them 'brothers'. In view of his background, Brog is strategically placed under the banner of CUFI to win the hearts and minds of those American Jews who are still sceptical or uncomfortable with the Evangelical dedication to Zion, and also to 'encourage his fellows to break free from their fixation on past traumas and embrace their Christian allies who fight anti-Semitism as passionately as do the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'.²³² In his heart-felt statement *Standing with Israel, Why Christian Support the Jewish State*, Brog discards the most

worrisome implications of Darbite Eschatology with the following argumentative logic:

There is a wonderful irony in secular critics of Christian Zionism, typically Jewish, complaining about the great disasters that will befall them upon Christ's Second Coming. These critics, of course, don't actually believe that there will be a Second Coming of Christ. If there will be no Second Coming, then there will be no mass conversion or death [of the Jews]. So what exactly are these critics worried about?²³³

In order to present US Evangelical Zionism as a legitimate political partner to Israeli and Diaspora Jewry, Brog has to line up with pastor Hagee's efforts to dissociate such a faith from its Eschatological bearing. The latter envisages a future in which the Jewish people neither believe nor recognize their fate, whilst Evangelicals are providing essential financial support and tactical political backing to the Zionist cause right now. In an appraisal nearer to an indictment, the ultra-Orthodox Gershom Gorenberg charges that to demean the Jews to this 'mutually exploitative alliance' with US Dispensationalism amounts to being complicit with its anti-Semitic overtones. Further, those Jews and Jewish organizations who advocate close ties with the Evangelical Right would also undermine 'decades of dialogue with Catholics and mainstream Protestants who have undertaken the difficult task of reassessing Christianity's attitude toward Jews. It will be hard for Jews to affirm that reassessment if prominent Jewish groups are working closely with Christian groups like Hagee's which negate Judaism'.²³⁴

At present, the 'stock figure of the scheming and cosmopolitan Jews' found a new home in Islamic Apocalyptic literature, to back the widespread assumption that a worldwide Zionist plot controlling mainstream US politics and government is currently at work, this time to pervert the Islamic religious values and murder all Muslim communities. In particular after 9/11, Muslim Apocalyptic fiction became a vast sub-cultural phenomenon with fast-growing circulation, both via Internet and cheaply produced paperbacks.²³⁵ This genre provides a popular platform for the most vociferous and poisonous form of anti-Semitism steeped in strong Eschatological hopes for future Islamic triumph:

With the perceived imminence of the end of times, hatreds have been rendered inextinguishable and compromise inconceivable. The absolute violence and appalling cruelty of Islamist Apocalyptic fictions are sustained by the prospect not only of more and larger massacres, but also genocide. The disappearance of the Jewish people, either by conversion or extermination, is celebrated in advance, and with a fervour that is more commonly associated with eulogy of ethnic cleansing than doctors of religious law.²³⁶

As both David Cook's and Jean-Pierre Filiu's recent studies illustrate, the idea that a nefarious Jewish cabal is secretly manipulating the world to push it without mercy towards hell finds no resonance whatsoever within the classic scriptural and theological sources of Islam, where the Jews feature only incidentally.²³⁷ That idea would rather be a direct borrowing from Western anti-Semitic discourses. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of Islamic Apocalyptic pamphleteers uncritically assimilated the conspiracy template of the *Protocols* through the mediation of Dispensationalist exegeses. In stunning detail, Filiu shows how many Muslim radical writers ransacked the enemy's repertoire, in search for material that could be deployed in devising their own End Time speculations. They paradoxically grant authoritative status to prophetic scenarios concocted by Evangelical authors like Falwell, Robertson, Lindsey and LaHaye-Jenkins, but claim to have understood their predictive meaning better than the Dispensationalists themselves. By means of this looting, observes Filiu, the Muslim propagandists vengefully turn the Christian Apocalypse back against Israel and its American partisans.²³⁸ In their view, everything in the outside world emanates from the *Masih ad-Dajjal* (the Arabic term for the 'false Messiah' or Antichrist²³⁹) and his Jewish minions. In a mutated religious context, the Jews' dual essence, potent and at the same time malignant, is maintained and even magnified. On the one hand, these secret plots can rely on unlimited financial resources and unassailable positions of power; on the other, they are dead set on infiltrating and subverting the *Ummah*, both politically and culturally.²⁴⁰ Even in this End Time fresco, the satanic successes heralded by the spreading of Jewish conspiracy are part and parcel of that Muslim Messianic dialectic leading towards a period of most perfected peace and justice – the one that prepares the world for the Resurrection and the final Judgement. In line with the noted 'birth-pangs' rationale, the world must be fully pervaded by evil before the Mahdi sets Islam back on the straight and true path from which it had previously strayed. The creation of an all-encompassing, ruthless and ontologically evil Zionist world government would also serve as the necessary interlude to a military-political *redde rationem*, another Armageddon but this time benefiting the Muslim masses over their wicked foes - the Judeo-Christian crusaders.²⁴¹ In view of these arguments, Filiu submits, there appears to be an emotional contiguity between Dispensationalist and Muslim Millenarian longings, embedded on a strikingly paranoid and anti-Semitic outlook.²⁴²

6.17 An ironic over-assurance

The widespread popularity enjoyed nowadays by premillennial Dispensationalism represents a stark counterpoint to the meagre acceptance this prophetic outlook received when it was firstly introduced in US society. It was only during the late nineteenth century that a substantial number of American Evangelicals began to switch over to the pessimistic views of Dispensationalism. The shift in Eschatological paradigm occurred mainly in view of the fact that the postmillennial ideal of a perfect society had failed to materialize.²⁴³ This trend was furthered by the events scourging what historian Eric J. Hobsbawm has defined as the 'age of extremes'.²⁴⁴ Conflicts, revolutions and crises ensuing the outbreak of the Great War dissuaded anyone from still clinging to the contention that the trajectory drawn by human civilization was unabatedly pointing upward. A world constantly on the brink self-annihilation ridiculed the possibility of intra-historical salvation, let alone through gradualist reformation. Quite the opposite, the indisputable pervasiveness of evil was the main reason why many reoriented their hopes beyond the current aeon. As a result of a world growing threateningly darker, the vision of a catastrophic ending followed by glorious fulfilment abandoned the fringes of American Evangelicalism, becoming a theological viewpoint 'capable of commanding the allegiance of millions'.²⁴⁵

Although some may consider Dispensationalism as part of that 'cultural package' countless US Evangelicals have more or less uncritically inherited in guise of religious truth, the vast majority of scholars locate the underlying reasons of its success in a voluntary adhesion. This form of Millenarian consensus would largely depend on the enduring purchase of some Jewish and Christian Eschatological motives Dispensationalism reprises and amplifies. Most notably, Darby's doctrine convincingly neutralizes or at least downplays the complexity of history, by contrasting it to the teleological clarity governing the plan God has already foreordained for humanity. According to the proponents of Darby's prophetic system, past, present, and future align with a superior purpose. Once interpreted through the lens of this doctrine, mundane occurrences reveal no surprise whatsoever. Not only do Dispensationalists know the predetermined end towards which history flows, but also 'how it is going to get there'. In the pages of the morning newspaper can be traced an unmistakable confirmation of what has been carefully spelled out in the prophetic passages of the Bible. Taking confidence from this divinely inspired

awareness, one can hardly be afraid to deal with details. As Weber points out, Dispensationalism's greatest source of appeal lies on its remarkable ability to provide 'over-assurance' in turbulent times:

From the beginning of their movement, US Dispensationalists believed they had uncovered a scenario of end-times events. God was in control, and God's redemptive purposes were being carried out in the world. Beneath the headlines, a cosmic battle was being fought, one that would soon be brought to an end by the return of Jesus, who would defeat all God's enemies and establish, finally, His righteous reign on the earth. Dispensationalists knew there was nothing anybody could do to stop the prophecies from happening. (...) There is something comforting about knowing that historical events fit into a prophetic pattern, that God is guiding everything, no matter how horrible and apparently destructive, to a redemptive end. Once believers find a place for historical events in their prophetic puzzle, such events cease to terrify and bewilder. When one gets behind the prophetic charts and graphs, the speculations and erroneous predictions, one can see clearly that premillennial Dispensationalism is actually about religious, historical, and personal over-assurance.²⁴⁶

Any assessment of the ascendancy of Dispensationalism, argues Weber, would not be exhaustive without considering that 'ironic comfort' that this belief system can bring to people. Despite the fact that Dispensationalists might appear as 'the world's biggest promoters of gloom and doom', their pessimism is only apparent. In Pat Robertson's words:

We are not to weep as the people of the world weep when there are certain tragedies or breakups of the government or systems of the world. We are not to wring our hands and say, 'Isn't that awful?' That isn't awful at all. It's good. That is a token, an evident token of our salvation, of where God is going to take us.²⁴⁷

The prospect of a deteriorating climate - a world touching its lowest ebb in political, social and moral terms - is fully endorsed, and brought to its extreme consequences. The unsettling idea of deficiency, chaos and overpowering evil is nevertheless instantly neutralized once endowed with ultimate meaning: the worse the situation gets, the better things are. God will redress grievances of His faithful only when dismay reaches the trigger point required. That everything is decaying signals the imminence of that concerted supernatural intercession that will annihilate the current dispensation to bring the whole world to ultimate perfection. History no longer has meaning; therefore it must be destroyed to give way to a transcendental new beginning. Through the lens of Darby's theology, 'a worsening liability is transformed into a virtue and a matter of hope'. To Weber, this kind of over-assurance drawn from the idea of a world inherently beyond repair also represents the major ethical shortcoming of Dispensationalism as a theology.²⁴⁸

It goes without saying that the spiritual comfort Darby's teachings so distinctively offers is mostly attractive to those who feel lost and bewildered in midst of the Maelstrom. An obsessive quest for order always hints at its threatening absence. That Dispensationalism is a theology best fit for dark times would be confirmed by the fact that its popularity always peaks at moments in which 'evil seems increasingly irresistible and human survival hung in balance'. If the trauma of the First World War augmented the purchase of premillennial speculations amid US Evangelicals, so did the threat of an ultimate nuclear confrontation with 'the godless communist monstrosity' during the Cold War Era.²⁴⁹ 'As long as the world remains a terrifying place, seemingly bent on its own destruction, premillennial worldviews will always have the ring of truth for many'.²⁵⁰ It is therefore not surprising that Darby's prophecies received a new lease of life in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, when the world, or at least large segments of it, appeared once again prey to Satan and his ruthless emissaries.

6.18 Cultural Apocalypse

It makes little sense to call September 11 the most horrible case of terrorism in history, but it was the most spectacular. Al Qaeda's instinct for symbols ensured this much success: a nearly global perception that our ability to navigate the world was infinitely more precarious than it had been the day before. The perception was so wide and shift that for the first time in history not space but time became shorthand. If naming a city - Lisbon or Auschwitz - was enough for early age to record deepest shock and horror, the twenty-first century began by naming a date.²⁵¹

The shocking experience engendered by 9/11 represents what Ernesto De Martino might define as a 'cultural Apocalypse'. As a longstanding archetype of human thought, the Apocalyptic myth of world palingenesis does not exclusively pertain to the religious domain, as it might emerge in other cultural contexts such as politics, philosophical thought, literature, arts, etc. Once interpreted on this ground, the Apocalypse does not point to the violent annihilation of the mundane sphere along with all the forms of life contained in it, but rather to the diffused and unsettling perception of the impending end of a given cultural order. In the Italian anthropologist's opinion, this experience implies being outside any possible secular or religious horizon of salvation, completely detached from the familiar, facing without any comfort the diabolical unhinging of all that has been known.²⁵² All too often, Susan Neiman observes, these abrupt cultural breaks cannot be easily admitted in their gravity, notably because 'the only way to hold a world together is to deny that

it has been shattered'. According to the philosopher, this necessary denial also represents the main reason why sometimes historical watersheds cannot be overtly recognized as such by those who live through them, and therefore need to be pushed into subconscious recesses: 'one cannot be aware whether an epoch has been ended by an event when not viewing that event as epochal is essential to going on'.²⁵³

Within Lifton's psychoanalytical paradigms, the turning of a highly coherent world into a shaky and insecure one is quite tellingly called 'de-symbolization': the impairment of both individual and collective psyche caused by the absence of any integrating pattern, the horror determined by the feeling of falling apart, the fear that the centre will not hold or maybe that there is no centre at all.²⁵⁴ In most circumstances, argues Lifton, a 'symbolic death' of this kind might be even more frightening than the prospect of our biological demise. Nevertheless, for both the anthropologist and the psychiatrist, such a traumatic breakdown might also present a creative side. When things fall apart the outcome is not always destructive as these things might as well regroup around what Griffin calls a new 'mythopoeic centre'.²⁵⁵ The acute disorientation and anxiety put in being by the erosion of the traditional symbolic frameworks may plunge an entire society into a liminal phase. However, being divorced from meaning, continuity and connectedness would almost by default spur the 'animal symbolicum' towards finding 'a haven in some new and partial system of values, which aspires to become a total, absolute truth [and thereby] provides a bulwark against the definitive disintegration of nomic principles'.²⁵⁶ In our terms, for those who experience it, a cultural Apocalypse (or process of de-symbolization) entails being forced to act like that sailor described by Poe: once one is trapped defencelessly into the maelstrom, survival can only be assured by advancing a new and more adequate hypothesis on the mounting chaos.

As Emilio Gentile points out, after the demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics officially decreed in December 1991, the twenty-first century began as an undisputed 'American century':

[At the beginning of the third millennium,] the United States towered over the world like a colossus. It dominated business, trade, and communications, it had the strongest economy in the world, and its military strength was unrivalled. This supremacy embraced economics, finance, the armed forces, lifestyle, language, and mass-produced products, which flooded the world, consequently conditioning minds and fascinating even its enemies. (...) The dynamic and seductive, sophisticated and popular 'American way of life' was emulated and hated, wielding its power to charm over all peoples and in every continent, capable of working its way into every culture and society, changing them and

leaving the mark of its lifestyle. And those who hated America were fascinated, resorting to imitation to fight it.²⁵⁷

On the morning of September 11, in the first year of the new and promising millennium, nineteen Islamic terrorists, willing to sacrifice their lives for an ideal and carrying only minimal armaments, managed to hijack four commercial airliners rendering a world-catastrophe Hollywoodian movie into terrifying reality. From a perspective devoid of any moral judgement for the boundless barbarity of its outcome, Al Qaeda's plot achieved one of the most remarkable political successes known to human history. Namely because it transformed, in the space of just a few hours and with comparatively limited logistic recourses, the world's most prosperous and overconfident superpower into a 'grief-stricken community', a bewildered and humiliated nation 'tottering on the brink of chaos'.²⁵⁸ After the first plane had crashed into the North Tower at 8:46 am, more than two hundred million Americans followed the unfolding images of what was arguably to become 'the most horrifying global media event ever generated by the society of the spectacle'.²⁵⁹ That infernal prodigy of televised destruction made a hitherto unbeatable nation fully and painfully appreciate its vulnerability.²⁶⁰

In the opinion of Elemer Hankiss, the reason why the events of September the 11th produced such a profound mythic and symbolic impact spreading like a pandemic throughout American society and the rest of the world is essentially twofold. As already mentioned, in the decades prior to 9/11 the United States had become the beacon of the West, 'a conscious and unconscious, emotional and cognitive axis mundi', a point of reference to which countless individuals clung in terms of fundamental values, lifestyles and aspirations. By deliberately hitting at America's heart with the shattering of the proudest emblems of its glory, prosperity and might, Al Qaeda impaired the cultural framework undergirding the entire Western civilization.²⁶¹ Hundreds of millions of people lose an essential symbolic anchoring, plunging suddenly into a fearful vacuum. The hugely destabilizing import of 9/11 also depended on the kind of primeval-archetypal fears the event was able to awake and magnify at the deepest psychological level. In keeping with Ernest Becker's theories about the distinctively Western 'denial of death', the Hungarian sociologist claimed that that shocking carnage relentlessly projected onto millions of TV screens put a definitive end to the illusion of immortality nurtured in our contemporary consumerist society.²⁶²

The overwhelming encounter with death is also central to Griffin's reading of the historical watershed. According to his forthcoming study on the link between terrorism, 'as a single momentous, obsessing event', 9/11 'flung to the surface the suppressed recognition of the acute fragility not just of the Western project of progress but of our existential insecurity and mortality'. Reworking some of Zygmunt Bauman's thoughts on the disembedding experience of Modernity, the historian of ideas maintains that September the 11th had

such a profound resonance in the modern (i.e. Western) psyche [mainly because] it crystallizes, epitomizes, and renders palpable the liquefying impact of Modernity on reality and the anxiety this induces. [Since 9/11], not just each successful act of terrorism, but every foiled plot and trial relating to it that hits the headlines fuels and provides a familiar narrative shape and substance to what Bauman calls 'the Titanic syndrome', namely 'the horror of falling through the wafer-thin crust of civilization into that nothingness stripped of the elementary staples of organized, civilized life', a nothingness akin to death itself, or the closest our mortal minds can get to grasping emotionally the inconceivable prospect of personal non-being. For Bauman the true horror was not embodied in the iceberg, but in what went on in the bowels of the ship between the moment when it was struck and the moment when it sank, 'something all the more horrifying for staying concealed most of the time (perhaps all of the time) and so taking its victims by surprise whenever it crawls out of its lair, always catching them unprepared and inept to respond'.²⁶³

Not only did this 'shadowy aura of nameless menace'²⁶⁴ arouse fears until then unknown and thereby jeopardize the normal functioning of key symbolic frameworks. It also sparked a far-reaching spiritual crisis, the proportions of which were in some respects comparable only to the theological debate around the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust. This outcome was almost inevitable in view of the role faith has traditionally had within US public life, and sense of historical destiny. Whilst in their quest for overarching sense in that tragedy, vast numbers of Americans drew on their pre-existing religious beliefs and values and flocked to churches, synagogues, and mosques,²⁶⁵ others felt that turning to the traditional outlets of sacred meaning was neither satisfying nor possible. To them, the sheer enormity of the catastrophe randomly befalling innocent human beings could not be so simply accommodated in any accepted providential design, revealing rather its inadequacy in accounting for what just happened. In terms of received theodicy, it became challengingly difficult for mainstream theologians and clergymen to find a plausible religious justification for that scale of death, suffering and grief without insulting human sensibilities and reason.²⁶⁶ Despite leading figures from almost all confessional backgrounds spoke to the nation and their respective communities in an attempt to reconcile that tragedy with the inscrutable divine schemes, to many anguished

Americans God no longer appeared as an omniscient, all-powerful and merciful supernatural entity. Confronted with the inexplicable atrocities of that unforgettable day, some observed that God was most likely either good yet powerless; or omnipotent but utterly oblivious (or even indifferent) to human strivings.²⁶⁷

Other voices, especially in the midst the Evangelical Right, endorsed a more scathing stand, putting forward the idea of an unforgiving and vengeful divinity 'inflicting death and suffering on unknowing and innocent victims, to punish them for sins they had not committed'.²⁶⁸ Consistent with this reading, reverend Falwell declared that on 9/11 the Almighty lifted the 'safety curtain' protecting the United States from its worst enemies as a result of America's collective shortcomings as a Christian nation. God withdrew His favour allowing Al Qaeda to give America 'what she probably deserved' in light of several and reiterated 'capital sins', such as the immoral lifestyle of gay and lesbian communities, the murderous dealings of abortionists, and the secularizing campaigns waged by liberal associations. This controversial jeremiad was met with nearly unanimous disapproval, forcing Falwell to backtrack.²⁶⁹ Especially for those theologians and religious figures filled with indignation at such statements, the divine will and voice was to be sought elsewhere: not in the perpetrators of the terroristic attack (according to Falwell, the agents of divine chastisement on America), but rather amongst the victims and their witnessing during those dramatic moments of trial. In the tragic morning of 9/11, observes Rowan Williams, God's spirit could be foremost found in the last and deeply moving words spoken through mobile phones to their families by the people who were about to die on board of the hijacked planes or trapped in the collapsing towers. Those words celebrated 'the triumph of pointless, gratuitous love and the affirming of faithfulness even when there is nothing to be done or salvaged'.²⁷⁰

Furthermore, to give their spiritual reading to the events, historian of religions Karen Armstrong and theologian Duncan B. Forrester both referred back to Apocalyptic categories, but downplaying the catastrophic tones and Manichean polarization normally attached to the doctrine. In this case, the hermeneutical emphasis was not laid on the struggle opposing the absolute good of the wounded American nation to the ultimate evil of Al Qaeda - a dualism that in the opinion of two prominent commentators could only have fed into an uncritical and dangerous sense of self-righteousness. September 11 was rather to seen as an 'Apokalypsis' in the original, etymological

understanding of the word: a sudden breaking point in human destiny unveiling an ultimate truth (*aleitheia*) that has always been present, but remains most of the times hidden, denied or forgotten. In keeping with such hermeneutics, Armstrong and Forrester maintained that the shock caused by the terroristic attack was first of all an Apocalyptic disclosure on the human condition. By temporarily annulling the buffer zone between the safe and comfortable existence in the 'First World' and the perennial instability and misery plaguing the 'Third' one, 9/11 gave millions of US citizens a chance to realize how precariously transient is life for the vast majority of the world population.²⁷¹ On a not too dissimilar note, theologian Robert Franklin considered the disaster not as a mere democratization of existential angst, but rather 'a prophetic warning to the American nation, an exhortation to carry out an act of humility and repentance for its arrogance and abuse of power towards other people'.²⁷²

This vast array of different and seemingly irreconcilable spiritual responses to the same devastating trauma may be viewed as the relentless outpouring of our symbolic-mythopoeic faculty – the distinctively human need to impart convincing and coherent meaning especially when the 'spectres of chaos and anomie' seem to prevail.²⁷³ Premillennial Dispensationalism was one amongst the responses which arose from the unsettling impression that control was definitely lost, and 'the American society was being dragged headlong into a future for which it was not prepared'.²⁷⁴ In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, Pastor Hagee candidly told a BBC interviewer that the 'End Time began on September 11, 2001'; the whole world was standing on the brink of the Third World War, nothing but the birth pangs of the Millenarian age.²⁷⁵ It is safe to assume that Hagee's otherwise far-fetched contention could have acquired momentum within significant strata of US society only by intervening in that vacuum left by the breakdown of the received and culturally derived worldviews – worldviews which imbued the US society with order, stability, predictability and permanence.

In guise of cultural Apocalypse violently irrupting within US collective consciousness, 9/11 engendered those psychological circumstances conducive to a shift towards a premillennial view. In the decade preceding Al Qaeda's attacks, the consensus of opinion subscribed to Fukuyama's inherently postmillennial proposition that following the end of the Cold war, American style government and free-market economy were the foundations of the only model that should and ought to be incrementally universalized, as it

represented the 'end point' of mankind's ideological evolution. As the result of the terrorist attacks, the utopian optimism of such a linear progress within the fabric of history wore suddenly thin. It became a no longer suitable possibility for the drastically mutated *Zeitgeist*. To John Gray, the men who hijacked civilian planes and used them as weapons to attack New York and Washington on September 11, 2001 did far more than killing thousands of innocent civilians. They in fact inflicted a mortal blow to one of Western civilization's underlying myths – as already noted, a myth of which the Twin Towers represented the central emblem and the US the ultimate harbinger. This epochal watershed, adds the English philosopher, opened the ground for a more catastrophic kind of palingenesis.²⁷⁶

6.19 Dispensationalism as a new plausibility structure

In his path-breaking study first published in 1967, Peter Berger described a 'plausibility structure' as that 'symbolic base' which every human congregation 'has to continuously construct and maintain for assuring its existence as a world'. To the sociologist, 'the firmer the plausibility structure is, the firmer will be the world based upon it', affording the individual to 'integrate the anomic experiences of his biography into the socially established nomos'. Accordingly, 'if the explanation of the world no longer holds', the human persistence within that world cannot be maintained very long either, opening a 'sense-making crisis' at the price of severe anomie and anxiety.²⁷⁷

In more recent times, building on and empirically testing the hypotheses put forward by Rank, Berger, Brown, Becker, and Lifton, a group of social psychologists elaborated the so-called Terror Management Theory, commonly known as TMT.²⁷⁸ For our purposes here, the crux of TMT model may be synthesised as follows: an overwhelming encounter with death (or in keeping with the model's terminology, a 'mortality salience' experience) undermines those 'anxiety-buffering' faculties exerted by cultural worldviews, whose primary role is not to 'illuminate the truth, but rather to obscure the horrifying possibility that death entails the permanent annihilation of the self'.²⁷⁹ Once deprived of this sheltering symbolic canopy, human beings are exposed to the 'the terror of death'. Otherwise put, the brittle and transient character of their existence (of which they are consciously or unconsciously aware given their uniquely human capacity for self-reflective thought) becomes fully apparent. To avert the disintegration of the 'psychic self' caused by the overriding feeling

that death lurks everywhere, individuals must promptly (re)create a more efficacious worldview – a new plausibility structure capable of transcending the natural boundaries of time and space and, in so doing, taming or displacing the otherwise paralyzing death anxiety, whilst restoring a culturally-based sense of invulnerability.²⁸⁰ Backing such an assertion with scientific evidence provided by comprehensive and exhaustive clinical investigation, TMT leading theorists Sheldon Solomon, Tom Pyszczynski, and Jeff Greenberg claimed that 9/11 functioned as a major mortality salience trigger.²⁸¹ The trauma, in turn, bred in many individuals the need to bolster their symbolic self-defences, re-orienting their allegiance towards alternative ‘immortality projects’, some of them based on the archetype of Apocalyptic renewal, which could more effectively assuage their existential plight.²⁸²

In the first section of this study, we saw that the threat the modern man faces in a progressively ‘disenchanted world’ is posed by the erosion of his ability to escape the terror of history through the repeated experience of the sacred. We also dealt in detail with the crucial role played by [cyclic and Eschatological] myths of decay, destruction and rebirth of the cosmos. Emphasis was laid on their capacity to keep at bay a sense of absurdity, and despair especially in times of calamity – the utmost manifestation of the terror of history. It has been repeatedly argued that within an Apocalyptic understanding of historical time, even the most unsettling catastrophe can be ‘symbolically accommodated’ by being interpreted as a sign that a phase of deficiency is reaching its nadir and a new and perfected age of fulfilment is close to its beginning. In Eliade’s words, ‘human beings living through ages of destruction and chaos [are able] to bear the burden of being contemporary with a disastrous period by becoming conscious of the position [they] occupy in the descending trajectory of the cosmic cycle’.²⁸³ By means of the myth of Apocalyptic-Millenarian rebirth, argues Griffin, one can seize the most remarkable chance of self-renewal, ‘the last and greatest achievement of the old disintegrating system and first achievement of the new, the moment when time is annulled and history radically formed in the heightened emotional climate of absolute zero’.²⁸⁴ Whoever has surmounted his or her Maelstrom in the way described by Griffin can be viewed as someone whose flight from inner/outer chaos has found expression and solution in an intense ‘elective affinity’ with a movement of cosmic regeneration.²⁸⁵

From a different but nevertheless highly compatible analytical perspective, theologian Richard Fenn maintains that the Apocalyptic solution tends to gain

currency in historical circumstances in which the received methods of divination, rituals, and symbolic resources upon which the polity has hitherto relied prove unable to foresee, postpone or explain a disaster. To Fenn, the unexpectedly new, the sudden and the disruptive can be domesticated only when appropriately subsumed within that cultural continuity between what came before and that which will come after. Accordingly, symbols, myths and rituals harmonising present with past and future are indeed 'the last line of defence against the passage of time: the final repudiation of the unprecedented and the irreversible character of moments and events'.²⁸⁶ These cultural stratagems granting a 'pseudo-mastery' over the pressure of Kronos falter whenever 'the scale of death' is overpowering, during plagues, famines, wars or natural cataclysms - moments in which people are lost in what Virgil calls 'a maze of dread'.²⁸⁷ The more a human congregation is subject to internal and external threats, the less it can believe in its capacity to survive:

Everyone is suddenly exposed to the passage of time itself. Anything can indeed happen anywhere, and at any time. The world itself seems entirely unreliable: not only dangerous but also deceptive. The appearance of being a safe and thriving land becomes only a façade that hides the threat of death. (...) Every attempt at prognostication and prediction, at interpretation and explanation, therefore fails to give the event a believable place in the society's lexicon for disaster. In such a circumstances, death is so overwhelming, and the moment so disruptive, that the past is irrelevant, useless or even forgotten, and the future seems inconceivable, impossible.²⁸⁸

The present is threateningly opaque because the past does not offer any viable precedent, whilst the future remains imminent but indecipherable. When such a vital connection between the present, past and future cannot be effectively reproduced, maintains Fenn, a society is not able to withstand the 'stigma of time', or better, it runs 'out of time'.²⁸⁹ Its members fall into 'despair, lose their will to live [because they] contemplate the possibility that they may become nothing in the end. Their soul begins to perish within them'.²⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the loss of *nomos* opens up a liminal phase in which a new form of 'temporalization' is desperately sought. In certain strata of the polity, adds Griffin commenting on Fenn's ideas, many might thus feel the need for a new gesture towards the 'renomization' of the world, wresting it back from absurdity by reinstating some elements of order.²⁹¹ It is in these circumstances that the Apocalyptic-Millenarian imagination, either in religious or secular form, is likely to take over. 'By reviewing the past, and by projecting not only disaster but the possibility of restoration and revenge into the future, [the Apocalyptic vision] recreates or renews a narrative that overcomes the break

with the past, softens the impact of the moment with the balm of precedent and recollection, and makes the future seem less opaque and frightening'.²⁹²

Although its theo-political rise dates back to the late seventies, it is in the post-9/11 historical, cultural and psychological climate that premillennial Dispensationalism gained substantial momentum. It did so as a new plausibility structure capable of restoring overarching meaning out of historical meaninglessness, as a new immortality project displacing the death anxiety or as a form of temporalization re-harmonizing the essential continuum past-present-future. An unbearably fluid, shaky and insecure world touching its lowest ebb was rationalized by mean of a highly periodized and deterministic roadmap for the future – a roadmap crucially promising a final reversal of fortunes, retribution and glory over America's demoniac foes. Dispensationalism successfully systematized the mounting tide of evil in premillennial terms, that is, it reduced a nameless menace into a set of antitheses leading to an ultimate and monistic synthesis.

The ascendancy of this alternative Apocalyptic framework is validated by the fact that, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 disastrous events, the radius and purchase of Darby's prophetic system (or at least of some of its defining rationales) appears to have exceeded the number of the already converted - the conservative Evangelical audiences geographically concentrated in the Bible Belt. The statistical evidence provided by a 2002 Time/CNN poll (a survey which almost every study concerned with contemporary forms of Apocalypticism-Chiliasm quotes in its pages²⁹³) gives credence to this last assumption. Weber summarises its main findings as follows:

More than one-third of Americans said that since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, they have been thinking more about how current events might be leading to the end of the world. While only 36 percent of all Americans believe that the Bible is God's Word and should be taken literally, 59 percent say they believe that events predicted in the Book of Revelation [in particular, the battle of Armageddon] will come to pass. Almost one out of four Americans believes that 9/11 was predicted in the Bible, and nearly one in five believes that he or she will live long enough see the end of the world.²⁹⁴

The conspicuous logic discrepancy between two key data (namely, 59 percent of the interviewees claiming that the events foretold in the last book of the Christian canon will, in fact, occur, whilst only 36 percent of them embraced the principle of literal/inerrant Biblical hermeneutics) may in principle dissolve if one considers the hypothesis on Dispensational consensus put forward by Paul Boyer. In his seminal study *When Time Shall Be No More*, Boyer charged

that Dispensationalists might not be the only people in contemporary America to be influenced by Darby's End Time speculations. In times of world unrest and crisis, many individuals who normally do not confer any predictive import to the Holy Scriptures, let alone to the Scofield Reference Bible, would suddenly become attentive listeners to prominent End Time mongers like Fallwell, Robertson or, more recently, Hagee, who consistently deploy Darby's script to explain where history is headed. To illustrate how the 'prophecy belief' works, the Wisconsin University historian portrays this phenomenon in guise of an 'onion structure', in which two concentric circles irradiate from a core of dedicated Dispensationalist clergymen and communities.²⁹⁵ The people included in such a core represent the 'innermost experts' who can account for everything taking place in the world, by quoting those Biblical references that are more suitable to cast an Eschatological light on present events. The first outer circle encompasses millions of US Evangelicals who, despite being less well versed in Darby's outlook, nevertheless believe that the Bible has relevant clues to offer about how the future will unfold. Once in need for prophetic guidance or spiritual reassurance, these Evangelicals will inevitably refer to those insightful Dispensationalist interpreters who seem to know best. Included in a second wider circle are greater masses of mainly secular Americans who confer 'scant attention' to catastrophic-premillennial scenarios. However, when confronted by 'sufficiently alarming earthly crises, [they] may suddenly buy into "prediction addiction", as what had been only peripheral to them now abruptly shifts to the centre'.²⁹⁶ Applying Boyer's heuristic framework one may better understand why, as a result of symbolic breakdown caused by the 9/11 trauma as well as of the ensuing 'climate of fear' fomented by several media and politicians, the Antichrist, Armageddon, Judgement Day and Rapture imageries went far beyond their Dispensationalist moorings, filtering out towards broader Evangelical and secular audiences. It goes without saying that with the Dispensationalist worldview moving to the fore also came, especially within US Evangelicalism, a renewed Eschatological interest (and consequent political support) for the Jewish people, their return to their Biblical home and the holy cause of Eretz Ysrael. According to the abovementioned Time/CNN poll, over one-third of those interviewed Americans who claimed to support the Zionist state reported that they did so 'because they believed the Bible teaches that the Jews must possess their own country in the Holy Land before Jesus can return'.²⁹⁷

6.20 Axis of evil

The shift towards a more premillennial *Zeitgeist* after 9/11 was also reflected in and confirmed by the suddenly mutated apprehension of evil within US society. As Historian Andrew Delbanco points out, in the years preceding the attacks many Americans had long dismissed the issue of evil from their daily lives, losing a vivid and connected awareness of its relationship to them: 'while never as in the world today had images of real horror been so widespread and terrifying. Americans did not have a language that linked up their inner lives with the horrors they continually saw in the world. The horrors of real war seemed indistinguishable from war in video games, and when they were disgusted by horrible scenes, they changed to another television channel'.²⁹⁸ By unveiling 'the viscous abyss of nameless horrors and irredeemable evil lurking just below the surface of apparently stable normality',²⁹⁹ Al Qaeda's suicide attacks abruptly reversed such a process, making millions of people come to terms with a hitherto remote metaphysical-mythical category. Along these lines, Hankiss has insightfully written that that unforgettable morning of mid September, some witnessed the 'sneering image of Satan' frighteningly materialize from the flames and smoke of the Twin Towers:

None could ever forget the sight of the airplane in the sky of New York, taking an elegant bend and then, suddenly, smashing into the tower and exploding in a fireball. It was stupefying to see this fearful metamorphosis of a beautiful, silver airplane, symbol of peace, freedom, and joy into an awful and destructive weapon: the metamorphosis of a dove of peace into a predator; the transubstantiation of a silvery angel into a fiery demon. (...) The minds of contemporary people are far less exempt from mythic elements than we would like to believe in our rational moments. The apparition of Satan, who with his black wings (caftan) spread over the Twin Towers, darkened the sky and the universe, seems to have been a rather common experience of those who witnessed the attack. In a picture that got great publicity around the world and showed the infernal flames and smoke of the explosion, lots of people discovered the outlines of Satan's face.³⁰⁰

In keeping with that which has been previously argued, Hankiss further stresses that the unexpected and traumatic pervasiveness of evil as an earthly contingency rekindled in many minds the purchase of Apocalypticism, whose Manichean thinking and monistic goals seemed to have significantly waned since the end of the Cold War. It is our main contention that, in the aftermath of 9/11 and with the human symbolic faculties desperately struggling to impart new meaning and purpose, the ground was prepared for the emergence of the premillennial outlook – an outlook, as detailed, restoring in the most faithful and potent fashion the original catastrophic rationales of Apocalypticism. The

appeal of this doctrine resides in the ability to find a solution to the problem of evil, by framing it within that Eschatological duel opposing the angelic forces to demonic ones. Its final outcome being already fixed from the beginning by God, such a struggle will no doubt lead towards the complete eradication of the negative polarity. Not only despite but also because of the current suffering and existential angst, the faithful can identify themselves with the only and absolute truth in the world and accordingly live in blissful anticipation of the eternal rewards and exemplary punishment of their foes, two outcomes associated with the consummation of history. As Biblical scholar John Collins and historian of religions Bruce Lincoln both underscore, in view of its flexibility and versatility, this longstanding Eschatological template can either accommodate a revolutionary-antinomian project which wishes to attack and supplant an 'offensive' status quo or be deployed for the opposite purpose, that is, to buttress the established structures of authority and their intra-historical politics.³⁰¹ This last application finds a resonance in the theological underpinning of the Bush Administration's war on terror as well as in the neo-conservative ambition to inaugurate a 'New American Century'. It is worth concluding this chapter by briefly taking into account that syncretic alignment between the Dispensationalist agenda for hastening the end of the world and another different but highly compatible palingenetic project to reform the world through a holy war against evil. The alignment was essentially made possible by the 9/11 cultural Apocalypse.

The enormity of evil attacking America and the civilized world demanded a commensurate response aimed at its utter and definitive eradication. It is crucial to note that, since its onset Bush's crusade seemed to be waged more against an ontological entity than a state or subject entity.³⁰² On September 12, the Republican president declared that Americans were called upon to fight not 'a nation or a religion', but evil itself. Human civilisation was 'at the beginning of a very long battle against it'. Although clearly discriminating between Islam and Islamofascists, in his following addresses, the president continued 'to demonize the enemy, identifying it in a non-personified manner with evil, depicted as reality, a sacred entity, which the Islamic terrorists worshipped and served'.³⁰³ As many theologians and scholars commented, as soon as the image of the enemy took on this impersonal and ontological connotation, US international politics began to assume Eschatological overtones. On September 14, Bush gathered with prominent spiritual and political leaders to mourn the victims of Al Qaeda's attacks. The National Day of Prayer and Remembrance,

an event celebrated with sacred solemnity in the Washington cathedrals of Saint Peter and St. Paul, has been unanimously recognized as the moment in which a mourning nation was officially launched into the 'war on terror'. In that circumstance, Bush's public expression of religious commitment took on a new tone, no longer speaking merely about a personal re-birth in Christ, but of a national palingenesis:

We are here in the middle hour of our grief. Americans do not yet have the distance of history, but our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil. In every generation, the world has produced enemies of human freedom. (...) They have attacked America because we are freedom's home and defender, and the commitment of our fathers is now the calling of our time. We will rid the world of the evildoers. We've never seen this kind of evil before. But the evildoers have never seen the American people in action before, either, and they're about to find out. Every nation in every region now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty have always been at war. And we know that God is not neutral between them. Ours is the cause of human dignity. This idea of America is the hope of all mankind. That hope drew millions to this harbour. That hope still lights our way. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness will not overcome it.³⁰⁴

The presidential message is imbued with rudimentary ideas, Manichean simplifications, and axiomatic truths. The contrast is built between righteousness and perdition. No neutrality, hesitation or middle ground: you are 'either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists'. It is pointless to try to understand the evildoers' motives and real nature. As a political response to 9/11, Bush seemed keen to extend to US foreign affairs his personal experience of a reborn Christian, an experience marked by the rejection of all previous sinful life and the embrace of the true and only path. Emphasis was therefore laid not on the need to seek justice for the murderous attacks, but on a climatic struggle against the 'axis of evil' to be pursued globally. Mirroring the approach of his enemies, on September 14 Bush waged a 'altruistic' Jihad setting America on the duty to make the world 'born again' – namely, by ridding it from evil and spreading the seeds the democracy and freedom in its place.

Jim Wallis - a liberal Evangelical theologian who has extensively written about the president's religious rhetoric - maintains that after 9/11 Bush's presidential approach transformed dramatically, along with his notion of himself and his place in history. Bush had previously been a sort of a self-help Methodist, someone whose faith had produced a difference in his personal life, solving drinking and family issues. When September 11th came, argues Wallis, the self-help Methodist became a 'Messianic American Calvinist'. The line 'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it' is taken

directly from the Gospel of John [1:5]. This biblical verse, continues Wallis, concerns the light of Christ and the word of God, which shine in the darkness and have never been overcome. But, in the presidential speech, the meaning of that verse is no longer about the light of Christ, the word of God, but about the United States, the new 'beacon of light' to the world.³⁰⁵ As Lincoln's thorough textual analyses show, the codes and tones of almost every presidential speech following 9/11 were inherently Biblical in character, with strong emphasis on themes of ethical dualism, theology of election, and sense of redemptive mission. It is Lincoln's main contention that, by means of those speeches, Mr. Bush deliberately put forward 'a well structured syllogism, in which two premises – (1) that, in its wars, the United States pursues the cause of freedom and (2) that this cause originates, not with the United States, but with God himself – interact to suggest that an implicit conclusion: that the United States is God's chosen instrument for the accomplishment of His purpose for all humanity'.³⁰⁶

Especially when their marked Eschatological underpinning is considered, one might easily claim that Bush's holy war mentality represents an almost mimetic counterpoint to Al Qaeda's jihadist manifesto.³⁰⁷ Akin to Bin Laden's, Bush's rhetoric drew, most likely unconsciously, from the archetypal understanding of historical development originally systematized by Zoroastrian Eschatology. As described in the first section of this study,³⁰⁸ this three-phase template envisages a perfect past, when a Godly perfection ruled on earth, a broken present where the principle of falsehood and that of truth are intermingled, and a restored future completely rid of evil. This template, we argued, is also a determinist and foreordained progression towards a homeostatic stage of ultimate and no longer perfectible bliss. As far as the Bush Administration and neo-cons elites are concerned, this paradisaical condition is a final stage in which a democratic and free world economically organized around neo-liberalist principles would prevail over other forms of human government.

In view of the symbolism evoked during defining moments of his presidency, Mr Bush's conduct might also fall into the category of political Messianism - or at least as an attempt to establish a Messianic aura around his political leadership. As a scholar impressively receptive towards the mobilizing power of symbols, Lincoln regards the 'Mission Accomplished' address of 1 May 2003 as the apex of such a presidential Messiahship. Wearing a pilot's suit, Bush landed on the aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln*, where he was about to give

a speech to the nation celebrating the end of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, as epitomized by the recent toppling of his statue in Baghdad's main square. The event along with all the carefully choreographed iconography surrounding it was not a mere display of American military might and its glorious successes. To Lincoln, it was chiefly aimed at fabricating and conveying 'the impression of a warrior president and triumphant saviour descending from the clouds, master of air, land and sea'.³⁰⁹ It is well known that, even prior to the 9/11, Bush often presented himself as God's appointed agent, legitimate beneficiary of His support, and defender of the divine attributes and virtues against their adversaries.³¹⁰ Nevertheless, in that circumstance, the president had more ambitious aspirations. He tried to elevate his political persona to the status of a king or high priest undertaking an act of quasi-divine recreation – in Eliade's terms, that kind of *renovatio mundi* expected at the end of history, when all evil is swept away, and the pristine perfection of the cosmos restored.³¹¹ Apocalypticism should be therefore understood not exclusively as the religious style that gives voice to the grievances and hopes of the oppressed and marginalized; or as a symbolic prism that assuages the angst of those who feel unbearably threatened by an anomic present. With opportune adaptations, observes Lincoln, Apocalyptic temporality, symbolism and tropes may equally serve as handmaiden of imperial propaganda and as rhetorical means to gather mass consensus around it.

It is worth noting that it was the exceptional circumstance of September 11 to provide Mr Bush with the opportunity to successfully put his Messianic persona forth on the domestic and international stage. As several polls cast just before the historical turning point show, the popularity of the newly elected president was rapidly waning, mostly because of his inconclusive political performances, lack of clarity about what his presidency really stood for, and poor skills at communicating to the nation. All of this also dovetailed with criticism for Bush's excessive use of religious rhetoric and his traditionalist-conservative approach towards public life. It seems ironical that as a result of the tragedy the same overly religious lexicon and bigoted attitude became key factors to convince millions that Mr Bush was the new 'Moses of America': a charismatic figure 'to whom the divine Providence had entrusted the arduous task of leading the nation at one of the most tragic moments of its history'.³¹² As Gentile details in his seminal study, the 9/11 trauma and the ensuing national crisis had been essential to the 'charismatic transfiguration' of a weak and

clueless president into a resolute 'pontifex maximum' and 'commander in chief' of a country at war.³¹³

One should not forget that Mr Bush's Messianic claims intervened in and capitalized on that exceptional climate of patriotic effervescence that spontaneously formed in the wake of Al Qaeda's attacks. That wound at the heart of America swiftly reversed a several- decade-long trend of national apathy and disunion, making millions of citizens rediscover 'confidence in the institutions and collective solidarity over and above political divisions, a greater social involvement and interest in the common good, and an impelling desire to participate and collaborate'. The 'extraordinary nationwide spread of patriotism imbued with religiosity' sometimes bordered on jingoistic pride and revanchism in search for a clearly defined enemy to strike back.³¹⁴ It was only by acting upon a renewed communitarian spirit coagulating around the 9/11 trauma that President Bush was able to develop and put forth a new and more Chauvinist version of American civil religion. Gentile stresses the highly idiosyncratic nature of this palingenetic creed and its creative borrowings from a vast repertoire of religious myths, values and tropes defining the US collective identity. It is undeniable that the majority of them were Eschatological in character.³¹⁵ On the one hand, as already mentioned, Bush's creed was markedly shaped by the same Manichean overtones and monistic ambitions underlying the prophetic worldviews of Dispensational Evangelicalism. On the other, it also included more postmillennial themes and ideas, such as a militarized version of the 'Manifest Destiny' - a core collective myth positing the United States as the 'Covenant nation', a 'new Israel' entrusted by God with the mission to redeem the world by universalizing the intrinsically American values of liberty and democracy.³¹⁶ The syncretic effort at the basis of Bush's political religion, adds Gentile, became key to morally and legally justify the spreading offshore of the war on terror as an entirely selfless act. It also played an essential part in mobilizing a hitherto shocked 'community of sorrow' into a 'community of faith', committed heart and soul to fighting evil on a global scale.³¹⁷ One might convincingly argue that as a result of sense-making crisis engendered by 9/11, an entire nation became a palingenetic community oriented towards a new beginning. However, such a community of fate inspired by Bush's Messianic nationalism did not outlive the exceptional circumstances that precipitated its formation.

If Mr Bush and his neo-conservative entourage exploited the post-9/11 climate in order to advance their geo-strategic agenda, the initial consensus they

were able to mobilize rapidly eroded. This happened mainly as a result of what has been labelled as the 'first grand utopian experiment of the new century' and, given its disastrous outcome, maybe the last one. Without considering the substantial breach of international laws generated by the Bush Administration's doctrine of pre-emptive war along with its unsubstantiated claims about Saddam's capabilities and intentions regarding WMD, the military campaign in Iraq was nothing but a sequence of fateful miscalculations and missteps. The fiasco became tragically apparent as the liberation of the country and its De-Baathification instantly turned into a full-blown insurgency. Chaos, looting and sectarian violence quickly engulfed the country exacting the highest toll of casualties both amongst Iraqi civilians and the US army.³¹⁸ As some leaking from US intelligence reports pointed out, invading that Muslim nation was only conducive to fomenting the surge of Salafist Jihadism (both in the region and throughout the world) rather than curbing its ascendancy.³¹⁹ As Gray's study details, the devastating failure to impose a regime change towards Western neo-liberalist democracy in a non-Western context was mostly contingent on the utopian approach of the neo-conservative project, ill-fated because incapable of taking into serious account the complex map of ethnic-religious strife boiling underneath the lid of Saddam Hussein's tyranny.³²⁰

The unprecedented powers and moral righteousness uncritically attached to Bush's campaign against the evildoers did not wait too long to raise their 'ugly head'. The firestorm ignited by the shocking revelations concerning Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib prisons questioned at its core the moral authority of Bush's altruistic Messianism. With a bitter irony, torture and utter disregard for basic human rights seemed to have become acceptable means in order to assist what were considered as the highest goals of a civilized humanity. In their pursuit of the perfect world, the US missionaries ended up as criminals. Such hypocrisy fed into Al Qaeda's propaganda. The abuses perpetrated in name of democracy and freedom opened one of the most challenging periods in America's history, heavily undermining its international standing and also spreading a wave of anti-Americanism even in those countries that initially expressed full solidarity for 9/11. In Lincoln's opinion, the depravities portrayed in the Abu Ghraib's photos were nothing but the default outcome of 'humble foot soldiers absorbing the [Manichean] symbolic constructs of their superiors', and implementing these very constructs with 'the limited means at their disposal':

Like children overexposed to Hollywood westerns who team up to mount crude versions of 'cowboys and Indians' on their own, the soldiers at Abu Ghraib staged and restaged variant scenarios, all of which delineate the difference between 'us' and 'them'. In these small-scale tableaux, low-level GIs endlessly re-persuaded themselves of the basic truths: We are high; they are low. We are clean; they are dirty. We are strong and brave; they are weak and cowardly. We are lordly; they are virtually animals. We are God's chosen; they are estranged from everything divine. In the vast majority of the pictures that have been published, the Iraqis are naked and close to the floor. In virtually all, they are - or have been made to seem - humiliated, demoralised, craven, and base, thoroughly dominated by America's superior power. For all that it may seem counterintuitive, I am persuaded that the mini-dramas staged at Abu Ghraib were not designed to degrade the Iraqi prisoners. Rather, they were designed to confirm the captors' worst suspicions concerning the Iraqis, whom they had been trained to regard as 'terrorists', as 'fanatics', as 'die-hard Baathists', or, simply, as Arabs and Muslims, but, in any event, as always already degraded. The point was to establish that such people got what they deserved and deserved what they got, being exactly what 'we' always knew them to be.³²¹

Since its first public formulation, Mr Bush's mantras found their most devout acolytes within the conservative Evangelical circles. These, argues Lincoln, were the target audience the president tried to lure into his holy war. His oversimplified rhetoric of deliverance from evil was unequivocally directed towards 'those who had ears to hear'. Reaching the Evangelical ears, Bush's Biblically laden allusions were likely to trigger a 'qualitative transformation', rendering a political message into a religious axiom and a religious axiom into a political message.³²² The overall direction taken by the president's rhetoric was remarkably consistent with the Dispensationalist attitude to invest merely human occurrences with transcendental significance. The traumatic events of September 11 were 'sacralized' and taken as indisputable confirmation of those prophetic passages in the Bible envisaging an imminent historical *dénouement*. Mostly congenial to the Dispensationalist mindset was further Bush's practice of redefining his own adversaries as God's enemies. Tapping on a longstanding and well-embedded premillennial obsession in demonizing America's foes, in his addresses to the nation Mr Bush seemed indeed to be naming the Antichrist and his emissaries. In the months leading up to the Iraqi invasion, Boyer was one of the first concerned voices pointing to that synergy which, 'in a shadowy but vital way', was aligning Bush's foreign policy with the fears and hopes of his most dedicated voting block. In a piece originally written for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, the historian charged that, by means of its calculated Eschatological innuendos, the president was moulding the premillennial hysteria burgeoning in America after 9/11 into grass-roots support for a looming war:

[American] leaders have always invoked God's blessing on their wars, and, in this respect, the Bush administration is simply carrying on a familiar tradition. But when our born-again president describes the national foreign-policy objective in [Eschatological] terms as a global struggle against 'evildoers', and when, in his State of the Union Address, he cast Saddam Hussein as a demonic, quasi-supernatural figure who could unleash a day of horror like none we have ever known, he is not only playing upon our still-raw memories of 9/11. He is also invoking a powerful and ancient Apocalyptic vocabulary that for millions of prophecy believers conveys a specific and thrilling message of an approaching End - not just of Saddam, but of human history as we know it.³²³

Several scholarly works on the subject have underscored how the premillennial outlook of Evangelical Dispensationalism proved to be strikingly compatible not only with Bush's theology of war, but also with the ideology of a small but disproportionately powerful component of American Jewry. As both Naomi Klein and John Gray suggest, the neo-conservative intelligentsia in Washington and at the Pentagon was steeped in the utopian belief that democracy and free market would not prevail throughout the world in a peaceful manner. On the contrary, they could only be brought about by acts of creative destruction associated with an extensive application of American military prowess. Akin to Armageddonite Evangelicals, neo-cons saw the current world order as irredeemably corrupt and therefore in urgent need of drastic reform. It is hard not to trace in Paul Wolfowitz's or Michael Ledeen's call for 'a shock therapy-style' revolution in the Middle East another variation of that Apocalyptic template positing that wars, socio-historical havoc and natural disasters are best suited to clean the slate for a new dawn.³²⁴ Insofar as these Straussian acolytes were concerned, corporate capitalism was the final and most perfected form of human government.³²⁵ Kevin MacDonald reports that the neo-cons paired their dream of economic palingenesis with the so-called 'Israelisation' of US foreign policy. During the Bush era, their primary goal was to enmesh the national interests in the region with those of the Likud Party or other like-minded groups such as the national-religious settlers in the West Bank. As McDonald points out, the neo-cons in fact backed all those Jewish right-wing movements that were essentially 'driven by a vision of an apartheid-like, expansionist Israel where democracy is little more than an instrument of ethnic warfare rather than an expression of Western universalism'.³²⁶ In view of these 'elective affinities', it is not too surprising that Christian Zionism remained the only constituency supporting the war on terror even when its debacles and shortcomings had already become glaringly apparent.³²⁷

Nevertheless, what Gray and many others define as a 'heart felt alliance' or a 'highly toxic fusion' of secular and religious forms of Chiliasm³²⁸ should be better understood as a temporary convergence between quite different palingenetic visions - temporary because mostly reliant on the state of exception engendered by the 9/11 aftershock. As we tried to explain, there are indeed affinities. Yet, once the strictly anti-historical character of its Eschatology is taken into account, Dispensationalism can hardly be compatible with either Bush's rendition of the Manifest Destiny or with the neo-conservative ambition to establish a new American century. Despite their passion for creative destruction, these secular projects need history as a channel for mundane reformation. On this ground, they retain defining rationales of the postmillennial template. The picture of societal perfection that both Mr Bush and the neo-cons aspired to make prevail with the use of military might was a new international order under the aegis of the United States. Boyer reminds us that in the eyes of many premillennial Christians, 'there is only one true Kingdom of God and no earthly nation can claim that title for itself'. Despite their natural love for their country, Dispensationalists see America as being 'part of that world system which is passing away, one of those Gentile powers that will be either destroyed at Armageddon or judged at Christ's coming'.³²⁹ Its strong anti-historical charge remains the main reason why Christian Zionism will always find it difficult to present itself as a viable political partner, at least without softening its Apocalyptic edge and therefore losing a key marker of religious identity and appeal.

Many recognized in Barack Obama's victory in November 2008 another historical watershed, heralding this time the end of the utopian-palingenetic alignment between neo-cons and Evangelical Right. With the new leader at the White House, it appeared that the post-9/11 Apocalyptic climate had definitely dawned and the cultural trajectory returned to a less confrontational route. Whilst rejecting the temptation of moral absolutism in politics, Obama's new mantra 'yes, we can change' hints at the possibility of intra-historical improvement, but only through human laborious and humble commitment. The mutated Zeitgeist, Andrew Bacevich observes, would be also reflected in the spiritual dispositions of the Democratic president. Whereas Bush was a born-again Christian intent heart and soul on ridding the world of satanic forces, the newly elected would be, by his own admission, more incline towards the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr rather than that of Billy Graham.³³⁰ In

Niebuhr's view, an Augustinian appreciation of mankind's indelible original sin and flawed nature provide a far better foundation for attaining freedom and just government. The Protestant philosopher therefore dismissed any kind of political utopianism, Messianism or perfectionism as Promethean illusions, warning that these were not only useless for dealing with reality, but also extremely dangerous— as Hitler's concentration camps and Stalin's gulags proved during the difficult times Niebuhr witnessed.³³¹ God does not allow humankind to overstep his prerogatives, let alone to engage in Manichean crusades for defeating evil and establishing a Kingdom of God on earth. President Obama has written that he absorbed from Niebuhr's thought the compelling inspiration that democracy should be 'a method of finding proximate solutions for insoluble problems'. The exercise of power is necessary but always in humility, 'because human nature is imperfect, sinful. That is to say, we are always prone to excess and mistakes, to doing real damage, even with our best intentions and actions'.³³² The new historical turning-point marked by Obama's election seems to suggest that American culture and civil religion might be understood as an unending oscillation between the post- and premillennial ideal-types, and sometimes an intermingling between some of their distinctive characteristics.

For some theologians and political commentators, a less catastrophic and absolutistic 'quality of the time' would as well entail a diminished Evangelical influence over US foreign policy towards the Middle East.³³³ Others underlined the resilience of the Christian Right and its ability to adapt to changing cultural-political scenarios. Without sympathies in the White House, Evangelical Zionists may gear up with right-wing Jewish pressure groups and lobby against President Obama, should his administration decide to move aggressively on Palestinian statehood, or press on sensitive issues such as East Jerusalem and the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. In this sense, CUFI executive director David Brog stated that 'if tension were to emerge [between the US and the Israeli State], we in the pro-Zionist Christian community and the pro-Zionist Jewish community may be called upon to try to blunt any excessive pressure the Israelis feel on them'.³³⁴ The political dynamics at play in this mutated scenario are somehow validated by the numerous diplomatic 'detours' the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu took to address the audiences of Hagee's mega-church in San Antonio, sometimes even before visiting President Obama at the White House.³³⁵

In April 2009, Washington analyst James D. Besser contended that, although it 'may make a lot of noise on Capitol Hill', the 'conjoint gambit' between CUFI and Netanyahu would be politically inconclusive, namely for two reasons. Firstly, the Evangelicals lost their Republican base in both the Senate and Congress; secondly, Barack Obama counts on the consensus stemming from the more liberal voices of American Jewry, a consensus which place the president in 'a good position' to deal with such influential pro-Israel lobbies such as AIPAC and ADL.³³⁶ The situation in terms of lobbying influence has nevertheless changed in November 2010, when the congressional midterm elections brought a Republican majority back in the Senate. Further, new opportunities for a revived theo-conservative alliance might perhaps arise with the next presidential campaign.

There are already signs that religion will play a key role in the 2012 elections, as it has nonetheless been the case in previous presidential campaigns. Major media commentators underlined how Rick Perry ticks many of the boxes on the conservative Evangelical wish list. Not only does the charismatic and forceful governor of Texas pledge his commitment to the Christian Right's stand on abortion, same-sex marriage and other defining social issues, but he also justifies his support to the Zionist state on strict Biblical grounds, whilst criticizing President Obama's position on pushing Israel back to 1967 borders.³³⁷ Perhaps for this last reason alone, Hagee enthusiastically praised Perry, hailing him as the 'new Abraham Lincoln of America'.³³⁸ After Huckabee indicated he did not receive God's 'full blessing' for a run³³⁹, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann are at the head of the Republican pack as the most suitable nominees for Evangelical Zionism's agenda. Palin's alleged End Time beliefs hit the headlines once the ex-governor of Alaska criticized the Obama administration's pressure on Israel by arguing that growing settlement activity in West bank was indeed necessary as 'many Jews will be flocking [there] in the days, weeks and months ahead'.³⁴⁰ According to journalists Jeffry Goldberg and Kevin MacDonald, Senator Bachmann has also showed unmistakable Christian Zionist leanings while claiming that 'if the United States fails to stand with Israel, that will be the end of the United States. (...) We are inextricably entwined, as a nation we have been blessed because of our relationship with Israel, and if we reject Israel, then there is a curse that comes into play. My husband and I are both Christians, and we believe very strongly the verse from Genesis [Genesis 12:3], we believe very strongly that nations also receive blessings as they bless Israel. It is a strong and beautiful principle'.³⁴¹

At present, the way in which Evangelical Dispensationalists may attempt to encroach on Middle East peace processes is by providing considerable support to the Religious Zionist enterprise in East Jerusalem and the West Bank – mainly, by assisting the already existing settlements or helping more ‘scattered Jews’ return to the land of their ancestors. Jeremy Ben-Ami, the spokesman of liberal Jewish lobby J-Street, underlines how CUFI’s powerful and organized network is helping to deepen the illegal occupation that is today strangling both the Palestinian Israeli hopes for the future.³⁴² In more recent years US Dispensationalists have as well been backing some of the most dangerous elements within the Gush Emunim camp, in particular those volatile fringes living hills of Judea and Samaria who fiercely resist any diplomatic compromise over the integrity of Eretz Ysrael. These young settlers oppose the policies of both the American and Israeli government not by petitioning or demonstrating, but through systematic acts of violence and mayhem against the Palestinian population living nearby their outposts. In case of Israeli unilateral withdrawal from Eretz Ysrael, such extremist groups might respond by opting for the same ‘Apocalyptic path’ the Jewish Underground was willing to undertake in 1984. As previously detailed, in the terrorists’ mind, a single but decisive strike against the Muslim shrines on the Temple Mount would have precipitated final redemption catastrophically. By triggering the War of Gog and Magog against the Islamic world, the bombing of the abomination would have eventually compelled the Almighty to intervene on the terrorists’ side, defeat the enemy, and establish a Jewish theocracy on earth. In retrospect, such an attempt to force the end through violent means would have been most welcomed by many US Dispensationalists, as the Apocalyptic gateway towards their own Ezekiel War. According to both mindsets, there must be a confrontation of unprecedented horror in the Middle East before their respective Messiah returns, renders judgement and resolves human deficiencies by establishing a perfect symmetry between the world above and the world below.

¹ I reprise here the ‘short’ definition that Donald Wager provides in ‘A Christian Zionist Primer (Part II): Defining Christian Zionism’, *Cornerstone*, Issue 31, Winter 2003, available at: <http://www.sabeel.org/documents/CornerStone31.pdf>

² John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, London: Penguin-Allen Lane, 2007, p. 5.

³ Ibid. p. 7 and p. 17. The study has often been criticized as ‘reductionist’ and ‘partisan’ with its authors accused of taking into account only one single perspective in the multilayered and nuanced map of Middle East politics and history. Abraham H. Foxman [*The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control*, London, Palgrave, 2007] has perhaps delivered one of the fiercest rebukes. The National Director of the Anti-Defamation League demolishes

Mearsheimer's and Walt's book as another vilifying conspiracy theory reproducing the old template of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. According to Foxman, from its first appearance, this myth of an all-powerful Jewish cabal set on world domination has only contributed to spread 'the intellectual disease of Anti-Semitism'. This notwithstanding, none can really deny that since the late 1970s it has proved almost impossible for any candidate running for office, either Republican or Democratic, to ignore, let alone move against, the Israel lobby and its Zionist interests. Many contend that this would largely depend on the influence this pressure group is capable of wielding on US politics, mainly in terms of Jewish votes and financial backing to presidential campaigns.

⁴ See Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, A Road-map to Armageddon*, London: IVP, 2004; and *Zion's Christian Soldiers?: The Bible, Israel and the Church*, London: IVP, 2007.

⁵ See John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, op. cit., pp. 138-9.

⁶ It is almost impossible to ascertain the extent to which the Israel lobby, through its pressure on Washington's decision making, has consistently and effectively backed the Zionist state's efforts to quell or limit the Palestinians' national aspirations. Quite tellingly, the *modus operandi* of the whole lobbying system in American politics has been compared to a 'night flower', flourishing in the darkness but inevitably shrinking under the light of the sun.

⁷ In the author's opinion, the most reliable and updated demographic statistics are those provided by Stephen Spector in his excellent study *Evangelical and Israel, The Story of American Christian Zionism*, Oxford: OUP, 2009, pp. 41-43.

⁸ John Hubers's editorial retrieved on February 2, 2010 from the website of *Challenging Christian Zionism and Apocalyptic Rapture Teachings on Israel and Palestine* [www.christianzionism.org]. The director of the Institute for the Study of Christian Zionism argues that only a minority of American Evangelicals are 'walking in lock step' with Christian Zionism: 'It is true that many Americans, not only Evangelicals, but Americans in general, have fallen for or at least given a curiosity value to ideas that have their origins in the extremist views Christian Zionists like John Hagee and others tout as "Biblical". The centrality of Israel to the events of the End Times; the battle of Armageddon; the rise of an anti-Christ; the Rapture these ideas popularized by Fundamentalist pot boilers like the Left Behind series have taken on a life of their own. But amongst the millions of Christians in America who identify themselves as Evangelicals (including this writer) only a minority buy into what is known as Dispensational theology, which serves as the foundation for these beliefs'.

⁹ As Gary Dorrien observes, the term 'Evangelical' finds its etymological roots in the Greek word *evangelion*, which means 'gospel' or 'good news'. An Evangelical would therefore be 'anyone who accepts the gospel message that Jesus is Saviour and Lord'. From this perspective, being embedded in 'the gospel proclamation of the incarnation, saving death and resurrection of Christ', all Christian theology could be categorized as 'Evangelical'. On the other hand, according to Gerald R. McDermott, the *Evangelisch* message would stem from the Reformed tradition alone, the former being eminently focused on cardinal principles of the latter such as *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and *sola Scriptura*. In this sense, McDermott recalls Karl Bart's famous statement that 'Evangelical means informed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, as heard afresh in the sixteenth-century Reformation by a direct return to Holy Scripture'. See Gary Dorrien, 'Evangelical Ironies, Theology, Politics and Israel'; and Gerald R. McDermott, 'Evangelical and Israel' both in Alan Mittleman, Byron Johnson, and Nancy Isserman (ed.), *Uneasy Allies? Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, New York: Lexington Books, 2007, pp. 104-110 and pp. 129-33.

¹⁰ Stephen Spector, *Evangelical and Israel, The Story of American Christian Zionism*, op. cit., p. 36.

¹¹ See John Green, 'Evangelical Protestants and Jews: A view from the Polls' in Alan Mittleman, Byron Johnson, and Nancy Isserman (ed.), *Uneasy Allies? Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, op. cit., pp. 19-38.

¹² Stephen Spector, *Evangelical and Israel, The Story of American Christian Zionism*, op. cit., pp. 40-43.

¹³ Paul Boyer, 'The Middle East in Modern American Popular Prophetic Belief', in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imaging the End, Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, op. cit., p. 312.

¹⁴ John Hagee, today one of the most influential Christian Zionist leaders, charges that considering Eretz Ysrael's boundaries as enshrined in the Biblical Covenants, 'we discover that Israel and her offspring will have far more Land when the Messiah comes than they presently do. Israel's boundaries established time and time again in the Old Testament, will include all of present-day Israel, all of Lebanon, half of Syria, two-thirds of Jordan, all of Iraq and the northern portion of Saudi Arabia. (...) God told Abraham that the Land would belong to his offspring forever'. See John Hagee, *The Beginning of the End, The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the Coming of the Antichrist*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, pp. 23-4, and p. 30.

¹⁵ As the pastor puts it, 'Israel does not exist because of a decree of the United Nations in 1948, but because of a covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'. Quoted in Rachel

Tabachnick, 'A Serial Obstructionist', *Zeek, A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture*, May 17, 2010, available at: <http://zeek.forward.com/articles/116518/>.

¹⁶ Cf. Stephen Spector, *Evangelical and Israel, The Story of American Christian Zionism*, op. cit., pp. 21-35

¹⁷ Cf. Aaron David Miller, *The Much Too Promised Land, America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace*, New York: Bantam Books, 2009, pp. 109-119. On a similar wavelength, Spector [*Evangelical and Israel, The Story of American Christian Zionism*, op. cit., p. 34] argues that in order to justify their pledged alliance to contemporary Israel, US Evangelical Zionists characteristically 'interweave' Biblical precepts with political/foreign affairs considerations, especially when 'they cite the fact Israel is a friendly democracy in bad neighborhood, the front line against a terrorist enemy (Islam) that also has the West in his sight'.

¹⁸ George W. Mamo, 'Luckier than Moses, The Future of Jewish-Evangelical Alliance' in Alan Mittleman, Byron Johnson, and Nancy Isserman (ed.), *Uneasy Allies? Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, New York: Lexington Books, 2007, p. 80. The poll was commissioned by the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ), a non-profit organization of which Mamo is currently vice president.

¹⁹ Cf. Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze, Sorting Out the Evangelical Options*, Downers Groves: IVP, 1992, pp. 100-8.

²⁰ See 'Archbishop of Canterbury Says Christian Zionism Not Part Of Christian Tradition', *VirtueOnLine*, February 24, 2010, available at: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/2010/02/31898-archbishop-canterbury-says.html>. Historian Martin Marty also claims that Darby's Dispensationalism is 'a mere fabrication', a 'false theology invented less than 200 years ago in the British Isles, and then shipped to America'. Quoted in Barbara R. Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: the Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*, Boulder: Westview Press, 2004, p. 20.

²¹ See *ivi* section 4.5.

²² For a synthetic treatment of the historical roots and developments of US Dispensationalism see especially Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More, Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, op. cit., pp. 86-90; Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004, pp. 19-43; and Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, A Road-map to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 26-105. For an account of the role premillennial Dispensationalism played and continues to play within US conservative Evangelicalism see George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925*, Oxford: OUP, 1980; and Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*, Chicago: CUP, 1970.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 74-77. According to Rossing [*The Rapture Exposed*, op. cit., p. 23], the Scofield Reference Bible represents perhaps 'the most important single document in all Fundamentalist literature'. This book is nothing but a version of the King James Bible with headings and notes Scofield added in the margins. These comment on each prophetic passage in light of the Dispensationalist system. With sales in the millions, adds Rossing, this mere commentary soon achieved confessional status, becoming 'the version of the Bible through which Americans read their scriptures throughout much of the twentieth century'. On the same arguments see also Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 40; and Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, A Road-map to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 119.

²⁴ See Elizabeth Phillips, 'We've Read the End of the Book: An Engagement with Contemporary Christian Zionism Through the Eschatology of John Howard Yoder', *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 2008, n. 21, p. 344.

²⁵ As Grenz [*The Millennial Maze, Sorting Out Evangelical Options*, op. cit., p. 94] points out, the word 'dispensation' can be traced in the King James Version of the Bible in 1 Cor 9:17; Eph 1: 10; 3:2; and Col 1: 25. The term refers to the 'administration of God's earthly household'.

²⁶ Darby divided sacred history as recounted in the Christian canon into seven 'discrete periods', during each of which humankind was offered salvation on a slightly different basis: Innocence (until the Fall), Conscience (from the Fall to Noah), Human government (Noah to Abraham), Promise (Abraham to Moses), Law (Moses to Christ), Grace (the 'Church Age'), and Kingdom (the Millennium). Scofield claimed that this scheme was natural, harmonious and self-evident: 'there is a beautiful system in this gradualness of unfolding. The past is seen to fall into periods, marked off by distinct limits, and distinguishable period from period by something peculiar to each. Thus it comes to be understood that there is a doctrine of Ages or Dispensations in the Bible'. Quoted in Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, A Road-map to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 114. Nonetheless, Dispensationalism is not the first theological system to divide the history of human salvation into epochs of God's administration. As previously noted, the Apocalyptic visions contained in the Book of Daniel already introduced a complex periodization based on successive but distinct eons. Later, in Patristic Christianity, prominent theologians adopted the six-days-creation pattern as a clear, coherent and deterministic scheme of temporal unfolding towards divine perfection. Saint Augustine concluded *The City of God* by outlining the six ages of history climaxing in the seventh and eternal Sabbath. In the Middle

Ages, Joachim of Fiore also followed a similar pattern with his three phased progression towards the Eternal Gospel or Age of the Spirit.

²⁷ See Grenz, *The Millennial Maze, Sorting Out Evangelical Options*, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

²⁸ For an exhaustive analysis of Christian Zionism's theological framework see especially Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, A Road-map to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 106-205; and Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*, op. cit., pp. 20-13.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 95.

³⁰ Cf. Carl G. Jung, *Psychology and Religions*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975, pp. 22-23 and pp. 61-62.

³¹ Quoted in Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, Roadmap to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 121.

³² Grenz [*The Millennial Maze, Sorting Out Evangelical Options*, op. cit., pp. 100-1] reports that US Dispensationalists purport to employ consistent literal hermeneutic to a far greater extent than it is claimed by defenders of any other Fundamentalist faith: 'Dispensationalists readily admit that the Bible employs symbols, of course, but argue that unless there is good contextual indication that a figure is indeed a symbol, it must lie interpreted literally'. O'Leary [*Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., p. 147] quotes Hal Lindsey's 'golden rule' of Dispensational interpretation: 'When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise'.

³³ Cf. Malise Ruthven, *Fundamentalism, The Search for Meaning*, Oxford: OUP, 2004, p. 64.

³⁴ James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, London: SCM Press, 1991, p. 41.

³⁵ See Malise Ruthven, *Fundamentalism, The Search for Meaning*, op. cit., pp. 65-66; and James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, op. cit., p. 46.

³⁶ See Gabriel Fackre, 'Biblical Inerrancy' in Brenda E. Brasher (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Fundamentalism*, London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 66-68.

³⁷ See Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze, Sorting Out Evangelical Options*, p. 118; and Paul Boyer, 'The Middle East in Modern American Prophetic Belief' in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imagining the End, Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, op. cit., pp. 312-335.

³⁸ On the generalized anti-modernist character of US conservative Evangelicalism's awakening see especially Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive US Again, The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*, Oxford: OUP, 1997; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism, British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*, op. cit.; and George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, op. cit.

³⁹ Ibid. pp. 225-26

⁴⁰ For a general introduction on the hermeneutical methods of Higher Criticism see Alan Altany, 'Biblical Criticism' in Brenda E. Brasher (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism*, op. cit., pp. 64-66; and J. W. Rogerson, 'Biblical Criticism' in R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlder, *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 83-86.

⁴¹ See Robert K. Whalen, 'Dispensationalism' in Brenda E. Brasher (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism*, op. cit., p. 135.

⁴² See Gary Dorrien, 'Evangelical Ironies, Theology, Politics, and Israel' in Alan Mittleman, Byron Johnson, and Nancy Isserman (ed.), *Uneasy Allies? Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, op. cit., pp. 105-6; and pp. 111.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 111.

⁴⁴ See Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism, British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*, pp. 97-102 and 139-41.

⁴⁵ O'Leary [*Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., p. 147] summarizes Dispensationalism's 'topos of authority' as follows: 'the biblical prophets predicted X; X came true. They predicted Y; Y came true. Since their predictions of past events have been proven accurate, the biblical prophets are an authoritative source of accurate predictions about the future'.

⁴⁶ Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, Grand Rapids: Academie, 1983, p. 231.

⁴⁷ Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed, The Message of Hope in the New Testament*, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴⁸ Rabbi Michael J. Cook, *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament*, Woodstock: JL, 2008, p. 249.

⁴⁹ Craig Hill, *In God's Time: The Bible and the Future*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, p. 207.

⁵⁰ Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., p. 156 and p. 158.

⁵¹ Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, op. cit., p. 28.

⁵² For thorough treatment of the dual Covenant theology see especially Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, A Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 117 and pp. 136-40; *Zion's Christian Soldiers? The Bible, Israel, and the Church*, op. cit., pp. 40-73; and Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, op. cit., pp. 16-24.

⁵³ See ivi section 2.6. According to many theologians and Biblical scholars, the most salient scriptural reference on relationship between Judaism and Christianity comes from Paul in

Romans 9-11. Reverend Robert O. Smith charges that in this passage the complexity of Paul's language exceeds the scope of a simple division between 'dual covenant' and 'supersessionist' options: 'Indeed, his argument is almost paradoxical. In Romans 11, Paul speaks directly to Gentile Christians: "But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you" [vv. 17-18]. The 'root' here is the preexisting Covenant with Jews into which the Gentile believers have been grafted by faith. Still speaking to Gentiles, Paul, joyfully identifying himself as a Jew, affirms both the Jewish Covenant and the eternal promises of God: "as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable [11:28-29]"'. Relying exclusively on Romans 9-11, it would therefore 'difficult to defend either a strict supersessionist or strict dual covenant understanding of the relationship of Judaism to Christianity. As is often the case, the complexity of the biblical witness on these matters is far more trustworthy than the simplicity of our categories'. Reverend Robert O. Smith, 'Jewish-Christian Difficulties in Challenging Christian Zionism', *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, May 2007, Volume 7, available at: <http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Journal-of-Lutheran-Ethics/Issues/May-2007/Jewish-Christian-Difficulties-in-Challenging-Christian-Zionism.aspx>.

⁵⁴ See Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze, Sorting Out Evangelical Options*, op. cit., pp. 95-97 and p. 102.

⁵⁵ Cf. Timothy Weber, *On the Road of Armageddon, How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*, op. cit., p. 23.

⁵⁶ This logic inconsistency is raised by Rabbi Michael J. Cook in *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament*, op. cit., p. 240.

⁵⁷ A statement made by pastor John Hagee and quoted in Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, A Road to Armageddon?*, op. cit., p. 140.

⁵⁸ Restorationism predates Darby's Dispensationalism as its underlying principles can be traced within Dutch, British and American Chiliastic circles at least since the Reformation period. The doctrine denotes 'the Christian belief that Jews will be restored to their homeland in Biblical Israel as a sign of God's impending Millennial Kingdom, usually just before, after or during a mass conversion of Jews to Christianity'. See Stephen R. Haynes, *Reluctant Witnesses, Jews and the Christian Imagination*, Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995, pp. 50-55. Along with the belief that Christians should actively support a Jewish ingathering in Palestine, Restorationism entails a proselytizing-missionary attitude towards the Chosen People as a method to advance the economy of salvation. In light of this last aspect, the doctrine overlaps with, but at the same time remains quite distinct from Darby's Dispensationalism. On this subject see especially Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion: Christian Witness and the Restoration of Israel*, London; Hodder and Stoughton, 1991; Kenneth G. C. Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Exegesis*, Cambridge: CUP, 2000; Michael J Pragai, *Faith and Fulfillment, Christians and the Return to the Promised Land*, London: Vallentine, 1985; and Yaakov Ariel's two studies *Evangelizing the Chosen People, Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000*, Chapel Hill: UNCP, 2000; *On Behalf of Israel, American Fundamentalist attitudes towards Jews, Judaism, and Zionism, 1865-1945*, Chicago: CUP, 1991.

⁵⁹ Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, A Road to Armageddon?*, op. cit., p. 102.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 142.

⁶¹ See *ivi* section 2.5.

⁶² See Donald Wagner, *Anxious for Armageddon, A Call to Partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Christians*, Waterloo: Herald Press, 1995, pp. 62-64. The same argument is raised by Colin Chapman in *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine*, op. cit., pp. 120-49.

⁶³ The Scriptural-Covenantal bases which US Evangelicals and Israeli Messianic settlers deploy in order to justify the Judaization of the occupied territories are mainly Gen 13:14-15; Num 33:52-56; Deut 7:1-2; and Josh 1:1-4. Num 33: 53 was emphatically cited by Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook during his famous speech at Merkaz Harav Yeshiva on 1974 Independence Day: 'The obligation, "And you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell in it" requires that the Land be clearly and decisively *kelal Yisraelit*, entirely in Jewish hands, that to this land, with all of its borders, we are to be committed to the extent of self-sacrifice in case of coercion, whether on the part of the gentiles, or – God forbid – on the part of Jews, because of perverted politics and perverted views. We must all be killed rather than transgress!' Quoted in Moshe Hellinger, 'Political Theology in the Thought of 'Merkaz HaRav' Yeshiva and its Profound Influence on Israeli Politics and Society since 1967', op. cit., p. 542.

⁶⁴ The most authoritative study on idolatry within the Abrahamic context is Moshe Halbertal, *Idolatry*, Harvard: HUP, 1992.

⁶⁵ According to Wager [*Anxious for Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 63], the real question that should be raised is whether, due to its present expansion policies and disrespect towards the Arab

populations living on the sacred soil of Eretz Ysrael, the Jewish people might expect divine punishment in form of a new exile rather than a Messianic restoration.

⁶⁶ See Rev. Robert O. Smith, 'Jewish-Christian Difficulties in Challenging Christian Zionism', *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, op. cit.

⁶⁷ See Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification*, Oxford: OUP, 1996, pp. 24-25.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Aviezer Ravitzky, 'Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality', *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, 39, 1986, pp. 90-108.

⁶⁹ According to Fiege [*Settling in the Heart*, op. cit., p. 117], this process is nevertheless far from being 'unilinear' as the surge of Arab terrorism during the second Intifada has re-awakened 'primeval fears' in all the Israelis, religious or secular alike.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 119.

⁷¹ As noted in the previous chapter, the national-religious position on the Land of Israel is that the latter belongs to the Jews alone and by Biblical injunction. This sacred postulate, argues Sprinzak, has 'definite and binding implications'. First of all, 'the universal principle of self-determination - even if it may have some relevance in other places - does not hold in this case. The "Palestinian Problem" or the demand by the Palestinians for national self-determination is therefore meaningless'. In keeping with the Torah, continues Sprinzak, 'the non-Jewish residents are to be treated by the people of Israel with tolerance and respect but no more'. All the Arabs either living within the Green Line or in Judea and Samaria are therefore confronted with three alternatives: 'to acknowledge publicly the legitimacy of the Zionist doctrine (or better, the Gush Emunim's version of it), and to receive full civil rights, including the right to elect and be elected to the Knesset and serve in the army; to obey the laws of the state without formal recognition of Zionism and be in return granted full rights of resident aliens (but not political rights); or to be offered economic incentives to immigrate to Arab countries'. See Ehud Sprinzak, 'Gush Emunim: The Tip of the Iceberg', *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, Number 21, Fall 1981.

⁷² Quoted in Uriel Tal, 'Foundations of a Political Messianic Trend in Israel', op. cit. Tal comments that not only does the actualization of Jewish 'law of destiny' override the human rights of non-Jewish residents in Eretz Ysrael, but also and crucially require their emigration from it.

⁷³ Quoted in Michael Fiege, *Settling in the Heart*, op. cit., p. 120. The Rabbi continues as follows: 'It is a good idea, in order to increase peace, to meet the Arabs who live in the land of Israel, but only on the condition that it will be based on the truth; namely, that they recognize the fact that this land is ours, this state is ours, and that we have taken no state from them, nor do we owe them any state. If they recognize this, it is good to meet them and, if they don't, then they are liars, and we have no dealings with liars'. Furthermore, any aspiration for an autonomous state may counter the Palestinians' self-interest. In this sense, many within the Merkaz Harav circles purport the classic 'Orientalist' argument that the settlement enterprise 'made the desert bloom', bestowing the benefits of Western civilization even on the natives - who accordingly should only be grateful. The same logic is often endorsed by many US Evangelicals. Mike Huckabee, for instance, describes Israel's hold on Judea and Samaria as 'accommodation', rather than 'occupation'. Indeed, the Jewish State would bring 'all types of services to the Arab communities such as schools, infra-structure development, hospitals, and welfare payments'. See 'Mike Huckabee to Attend Gala at Disputed East Jerusalem Hotel', *Haaretz*, August 18, 2009, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/mike-huckabee-to-attend-gala-at-disputed-east-jerusalem-hotel-1.281951>; and 'Huckabee Hobnobs with Hilltop Youth at Moskowitz' Shepherd Hotel', *Opinion*, August 20, 2009, available at: <http://www.comeandsee.com/view.php?sid=1009>.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Moshe Hellinger, 'Political Theology in the Thought of Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva and its Profound Influence on Israeli Politics and Society since 1967', op. cit., pp. 543-45. Rabbi Zvi Tau was a disciple of the Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook and after the latter's death became one of the senior rabbis at the Merkaz Harav Yeshiva.

⁷⁵ See Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 169-71.

⁷⁶ Spector [*Evangelical and Israel, The Story of American Christian Zionism*, op. cit., p. 26 and p. 132] reports that 'Christian Zionists, like Religious Zionists, are emphatic that God blessed Isaac and established his everlasting Covenant with him and his descendants, not with Ishmael. God told Abraham, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named" [Genesis 17:19 and 21:12]. After the birth of Isaac, Ishmael and his mother were driven out of the community, because Isaac was, rather than his stepbrother, appointed the heir of the divine Covenant'. Another argument many US Christian Zionists often put forward consists in the implicitly anti-Semitic innuendo that the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict is somehow the end result of the Jewish Patriarch's and his wife's shortcomings: 'Ishmael was the product of Abraham and Sarah's impatience and lack of faith. (...) There would be no Israeli-Arab conflict if not for Abraham's lack of faith, and his wife Sarah's. In fact, they say, there would be no Arabs. The blood spilled in Israel is thus the result of Sarah's and Abraham's impatience, disbelief and disobedience. As a result, the

descendants of Ishmael will be a thorn in your side. This is a standard Christian Zionist understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Abraham's temporary lapse of faith led to 4,000 years of catastrophe for the Jews'.

⁷⁷ See the voice 'Ishmael' in John Bowker (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, op. cit., p. 478.

⁷⁸ Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, A Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 162.

⁷⁹ For a succinct analysis of the Biblical understanding of and approach to ancient Canaanites see especially Louis H. Feldman, *Remember Amalek! Vengeance, Zealotry, and Group Destruction in the Bible According to Philo, Pseudo-Philo, and Josephus*, Detroit: Huc Press: 2004, pp. 134-46; and Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, op. cit., pp. 68-71. Rabbi Telushkin contends that the most morally problematic injunctions contained in the Torah are those commanding to wipe out the idolatrous and sexually perverted tribes of Canaan. Apart from the ruthless and callous modes to wage war against Israel's neighbours promoted in the Book of Joshua, Deuteronomy 20: 17-18 compels the Jewish people as follows: 'You shall utterly destroy them - the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites - as the Lord commanded you, lest they lead you into doing all the abhorrent things that they have done for their gods and you stand guilt before the Lord your God'. Philosopher Walter Kaufmann charges that the injunction to eliminate the seven nations of Canaan represents the starkest counterpoint to other key Biblical verses promoting love for the stranger and respect for human life.

⁸⁰ As far as Gush Emunim is concerned, the theme of redemption through purification from the corrupting agents is brilliantly unpacked and analyzed by Uriel Tal, 'Foundations of a Political Messianic Trend in Israel', op. cit.; Janet Aviad, 'The Contemporary Israeli Pursuit of the Millennium', op. cit.; and Israel Shahak, 'The Ideology of Jewish Messianism', *Race and Class, A Journal on Racism, Empire and Globalisation*, Volume 37, Number 2, 1995, pp. 81-91. At present, a similar rhetoric is embraced by Daniella Weiss, the spiritual mentor to the Hilltop Youth battling against the removal of outlawed settlements and outposts from the West Bank. According to 'first lady' of Judea and Samaria, 'what will be with the Arabs is what it was with all the nations that were here all through history; they came and went... They are a sort of - I am going to use a very, very dangerous word - a sort of filter through which our nation finds its way towards the Land. The guiding lines to deal with the Arab question, Weiss continues, 'were those laid down by Joshua in his conquest of Canaan: "Those who make peace, we will make peace with them; those who fight, we will fight them. And those who do not accept our sovereignty... will leave the Land"'. These are the options. And they haven't changed'. Quoted in Donald Macintyre, 'Daniella Weiss: "The Arabs are a filter through which we find our way to Land"', *The Independent*, October 12, 2008, available at:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/daniella-weiss-the-arabs-are-a-filter-through-which-we-find-our-way-to-land-958715.html?service=Print>.

⁸¹ Pat Robertson, 'Why Evangelical Christians Support Israel', *The Official Site of Pat Robertson*, December 17, 2003, available at: <http://www.patrobertson.com/Speeches/IsraelLauder.asp>.

⁸² The numerous Evangelical grievances and concerns for the 'Islamofascist menace' are listed in Stephen Spector, *Evangelical and Israel*, op. cit., pp. 50-75. Spector [Ibid., p. 51] also highlights the logical inconsistency on part of many US Evangelical Zionists of opposing heart and soul the establishment of a democratic regime in Palestine, whilst advocating the same very solution in Iraq: 'When it comes to Iraq, Evangelicals tend to be the most confirmed political idealists in America: more than any other religious or ethnic group, they have supported the goal of transforming the region by spreading democracy and freedom, even by force. They hold the opposite philosophy with regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however. In that respect, Christian Zionists tend to be confirmed political realists, insisting that the Palestinian people cannot be transformed'. Nonetheless, Spector forgets to mention that US Christian Zionism's differentiate approach in terms of democratic aspirations in the Middle East perfectly matched the neo-conservative agenda during the Bush Administration.

⁸³ Fiege [*Settling in the Heart*, op. cit., pp. 118-19] reports that, given the implications that might stem from such an approach, mainstream Gush Emunim has never openly resorted to the measures of the extreme secular or religious Right - namely, the transfer of the Palestinians from the Land. 'The typical Gush Emunim approach', continues Fiege, 'hints at the possibility of population transfer, not as a mass solution, but reserved only for those who refuse to accept Israeli presence and sovereignty; namely, the presumably relatively small and identifiable group of agitators'. In 1985, Rabbi Dan Be'ri, a leading figure within the Religious Zionist panorama, publically declared: 'we must clarify to them that while we have the power they will not receive any sovereignty in our Land. Citizenship is for the sons of the Jewish nation alone: we should render them the status of gerim, autonomous as much as possible. If they display hostility, [we should] evict them from the land or fight them'.

⁸⁴ On these arguments see especially Louis H. Feldman's seminal study *Remember Amalek! Vengeance, Zealotry, and Group Destruction in the Bible According to Philo, Pseudo-Philo, and Josephus*, op. cit; and Gerhard von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel*, Gran Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

⁸⁵ On February 26, 1980, an article entitled 'The Mitzvah of Genocide in the Torah' appeared in Bat Kol, the student publication of Bar-Ilan University, which is Israel's major Orthodox institution of higher learning. Following the article's publication, there were no expressions of protest from the Bat Kol editorial board, Bar-Ilan students, or the university administration, and it was later reprinted in other newspapers.

⁸⁶ Shahak and Mezvinsky [*Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel*, op. cit., pp. 64-65] report that during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, 'the military rabbinate published a map of the region in which the names of Lebanese towns had been changed to the names of cities found in the Book of Joshua. The map designated Lebanon as land belonging to the ancient northern tribes of Israel'. The authors emphasize how IDF presence in Lebanon was portrayed as confirming the validity of the Biblical promise in Deuteronomy 11:24 ['Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours; our border shall be from the wilderness, from the river Euphrates, to the western sea']. According to Shahak and Mezvinsky, Gush Emunim members considered Lebanon 'as being delivered from the power of Satan with its inhabitants being killed in the process'.

⁸⁷ See Katya Adler, 'The Rise of Israel's Military Rabbis', *BBC Newsnight*, Israel, September 7, 2009, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/8232340.stm>. Military Rabbi Lieutenant Shmuel Kaufman was reported to have delivered to his combat unit a pre-battle address informed by the Messianic rhetoric of holy war. He claimed that his 'job' consisted in boosting the fighting spirit of the soldiers 'by taking the Torah to the battlefield'. Further, just like Joshua before conquering the Land of Israel, redeeming it from the impure hands of heathens, Rabbi Kaufman blown the ram's horn making the war against Hamas 'holier'.

⁸⁸ See Martin E. Marty, 'Israel's Holy War', *Divinity School at the University of Chicago*, April 28, 2010, available at:

http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications/sightings/archive_2010/0426.shtml.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Amos Harel, 'IDF rabbinate publication during Gaza war: We will show no mercy on the cruel', *Haaretz*, January 26, 2009, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/idf-rabbinate-publ...mercy-on-the-cruel>

[1.268849?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.225%2C2.226%2C](http://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/idf-rabbinate-publ...mercy-on-the-cruel). The ICG report [op. cit, p. 22 note 207 and p. 23 note 211] quotes a military rabbi belonging to the national-religious camp as claiming: '[there is] a biblical ban on surrendering a single millimetre of it [the Land of Israel] to gentiles, through all sorts of impure distortions and foolishness of autonomy, enclaves and other national weaknesses. We will not abandon it to the hands of another nation, not a finger, not a nail of it'. ICG also reports an unidentified soldier as testifying to have received propaganda material with military rabbinate stamps calling for the rebuilding of Netzarim, a former national-religious settlement in Gaza. The IDF headquarters issued an official statement in which they 'severely reprimanded' the military chaplains for distributing such religious booklets, whilst claiming that they acted entirely on their own and without approval.

⁹⁰ According to the national-religious rabbi such a comparison is possible in view of the fact that 'the Philistines of the past were not natives and had invaded from a foreign land. (...) They invaded the Land of Israel, a land that did not belong to them and claimed political ownership over our country. (...) Today the problem is the same. The Palestinians claim they deserve a state here, when in reality there was never a Palestinian or Arab state within the borders of our country'. Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Quoted in Shmuel Hakoton, 'Gov. Mike Huckabee: Create Palestinian State Outside of Israel', *The Jewish Russian Telegraph*, October 15, 2007, available at:

<http://www.jrtelegraph.com/2007/10/gov-mike-huckab.html>. The speech was given at the home of State Representative Jason Bedrick, the first Orthodox Jew elected to the US House of Representatives. At the end of the meeting, in an informal conversation with Rabbi Moshe Bleich of the Wellesley-Weston Chabad Center, Huckabee went even further stating that 'those people who think of themselves as Palestinians are really suffering from a false national consciousness'. The idea of a Palestinian state in the middle of the Jewish homeland would be nothing but 'a political tool for forcing the Land away from Israel'. A web link leading to a video recording of the event is given in Spencer Ackerman, 'Huckabee in 2007: There's No Such Thing as a Palestinian', *The Washington Independent*, August 18, 2009, available at: <http://washingtonindependent.com/55530/huckabee-in-2007-theres-no-such-thing-as-a-palestinian>. Huckabee reiterated the same views in an interview given to the Christian news magazine *World* in May 2009: 'I've been to Israel 10 times; I've also been to virtually every other country in the area. This may put me in such a small minority, but I think this two-state solution is nonsense. If we're trying to get these two warring factions to occupy the same piece of real estate with two political entities layering over each other, that's absurd. We wouldn't tolerate it and they're not going to tolerate it. We shouldn't try to prolong the sense of that happening. [Israelis] not only have a right to existence, which is a fundamental agreement dating back to

the early 1900s in the Balfour Declaration, but a right to a secure homeland. The tiny sliver of real estate they occupy, surrounded by people who are hostile to them, is really a very vulnerable place for them. Hoping for this two-state solution is simply not practical'. Quoted in Marvin Olasky, 'On the Road Again', *World Magazine*, May 9, 2009, available at: <http://www.worldmag.com/articles/15329>.

⁹³ The controversial plan of *Ateret Hacohanim* is addressed by Louis Theroux in his reportage 'My time among the ultra- Zionists', broadcast on Thursday, 3 February 2011 on BBC Two. A written summary of the reportage is available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-12347050>.

⁹⁴ The timetable of Huckabee's pilgrimage to the national-religious settlement and outposts in the West Bank is provided in 'Huckabee Hobnobs with Hilltop Youth at Moskowitz' Shepherd Hotel', op. cit.

⁹⁵ For a treatment of Rabbi Meir Kahane's ideology and approach to Messianic redemption see especially Aviezer Ravitzky, 'Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality', op. cit., pp. 90-108; Ehud Sprinzak, 'Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism', *Patterns of Prejudice*, Volume 19, Numbers 3 and 4, 1985 and *The Ascendancy of Israel's Radical Right*, op. cit., pp. 218-20, pp. 220-23, and pp. 243-45; Raphael Mergui and Philippe Simonnot, *Israel's Ayatollahs, Meir Kahane and the Far Right in Israel*, New York: Saqi, 1987; and Robert I. Friedman, *The False Prophet, Rabbi Meir Kahane – From FBI informant to Knesset Member*, London: Faber, 1990.

⁹⁶ Quote taken from the transcript the Front Line's reportage 'Israel Next War' broadcast on April 5, 2005 on PBS, transcript available at:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/israel/etc/script.html>.

*Peace Now (in Hebrew 'Shalom Achshav') is a well-known Israeli progressive NGO that advocates a just peace and a historic reconciliation with the Palestinians and neighboring Arab nations, to be obtained through a territorial compromise based on the diplomatic formula of 'land for peace'.

⁹⁷ See Aviezer Ravitzky, 'Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality', op. cit; and Ehud Sprinzak, 'Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism', op. cit.

⁹⁸ See especially the document 'The Kach Movement' issued by the Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 3, 1994, available at:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Law/Legal+Issues+and+R...ACH+MOVEMENT+-+BACKGROUND+-+03-Mar-94.htm?DisplayMode=print>; 'Kach, Kahane Chai (Israel, extremists)', *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 20, 2008, available at:

http://www.cfr.org/israel/kach-kahane-chai-israel-extremists/p9178?breadcrumb=%2Fabout%2Fnewsletters%2Feditorial_detail%3Fid%3D1332;

and the document 'Country Reports on Terrorism 2004' issued by the US Department of State - Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism on April 2005, available at:

www.state.gov/documents/organization/45313.pdf.

⁹⁹ On the kind of antinomian action these second generation Sabra settlers undertake at present time against the Israeli secular institutions, mainstream Gush Emunim and Palestinian population see especially Ami Pedahzur's and Arie Perliger's recent study *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, New York: CUP, 2009, pp. 111-137. In the author's opinion, this analysis however lacks a systematic and in-depth treatment of the theological-Messianic ideals underpinning approach and political mobilization of these fringe groups within the Israeli religious right.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Aviezer Ravitzky, 'Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality', op. cit.

¹⁰¹ See Boas Evron, *Jewish State or Israeli Nation?*, Bloomington: IUP, 1995, pp. 223-41.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 233. On the Eschatological premises for US Evangelicalism's traditional anti-internationalist stand see especially Markku Routsila, *The Origins of Christian Anti-Internationalism, Conservative Evangelical and the League of Nations*, Georgetown: GUP, 2008.

¹⁰³ For a detailed account of the Jacob's troubles see Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze*, op. cit., p. 104; and Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, A Roadmap to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 193-4.

¹⁰⁴ Armageddon is an anglicized translation of the Hebrew word 'har Megiddo' - the mountain Megiddo. This ancient Israel's military stronghold overlooks the Plain of Jezreel, some fifty miles southeast of modern Haifa. Probably by being the site in which countless Biblical battles took place, mount Megiddo has been traditionally designated as the location where the climatic battle between forces of lights and darkness will consume the End Time.

¹⁰⁵ It is often overlooked that the main purpose of the seven-year tribulation preceding the Millennium is that of turning the Israelites to the Christian Lord they rejected in the first place. See below section 7.16.

¹⁰⁶ It is worth remembering that Dispensationalists commonly expect the rebuilding of two temples of Jerusalem as the End Time unfolds towards the Millennium. The reinstitution of a 'third' temple is meant to be short-lived as it will function as the setting for the Antichrist's disclosure and rule during the seven year Tribulation, whereas the construction of a fourth and

eternal temple in which Jesus rules in glory will crown the Millenarian Age. For a treatment of the complex and often inconsistent prophecies about the rebuilding of the Temple see especially Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days, Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, op. cit.; Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, Road Map to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 170-73, and pp. 234-39; and Timothy Weber, *On the Road of Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 249-67.

¹⁰⁷ On the Dispensationalist subversion to mainstream Christology - in particular, the key theological tenet positing that Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection inaugurated a new aeon along with a redefinition of power and social ethics - see especially Elizabeth Phillips, "'We've Read the End of the Book': An Engagement with Contemporary Christian Zionism Through the Eschatology of John Howard Yoder", *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 2008, n. 21, pp. 342-61.

¹⁰⁸ The exact timing of the Rapture has always been a highly disputed issue amid Evangelical Fundamentalists, something of a 'family quarrel'. The majority of premillennialists are 'pre-tribulationists' as they believe that Jesus will secretly and unexpectedly return to snatch them out of the world before the latter falls prey to the Antichrist and his demonic schemes. 'Post-tribulationists' are instead those who hold to the expectation that Jesus will return to save His Church after the period of trial and woes - these are less literalist and logically do not adhere to the doctrine of the Rapture. Finally, a smaller but today growing number believes that the Rapture would occur in the middle of the seven-year period. These 'mid-tribulationists' insist that the Christian faithful will only 'experience the first and relatively mild three-and-a-half years of Tribulation and be raptured before the more perilous second half'. For a summary of these views see especially R. Bryan Bademan, 'Tribulation', in Brenda E. Basher, *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism*, op. cit., pp. 484-86.

¹⁰⁹ For example, New Testament scholar Barbara R. Rossing [*The Rapture Exposed*, op. cit., pp. 19-46] charges that the word 'rapture', let alone its doctrinal assumptions, feature neither in I Thessalonians nor anywhere else in the Bible. In order to fabricate the heretic notion of a Jesus descending to earth from heaven whilst true Christians meet Him at mid-air, Darby had to recur, once again, to a 'pick-and-choose' hermeneutical methods.

¹¹⁰ I Thessalonians 4:16-17. The term itself comes from the Latin word *raptio*, a translation from the original Greek 'caught up' as it is used in Paul's epistle.

¹¹¹ Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., pp. 138-9.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ See ivi section A.4. The Dispensationalist 'attack on the self' is detailed in Richard Fenn's *Dreams of Glory, The Sources of Apocalyptic Terror*, op. cit., pp. 80-91. The meaningful link between sense of impending End and the call for purity (mainly sexual) is particularly evident in many articles, spiritual advices, and editorials featuring in the Dispensationalist magazine *The Trumpet*.

¹¹⁴ The correlation between the distinctively human awareness of death and man's compelling need to weave canopies of meaning, or that which he defines 'immortality projects to fence off that threatening awareness, is addressed by Becker groundbreaking studies *The Birth and Death of Meaning, An Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Problem of Man*, New York: Free Press, 1962; and *The Denial of Death*, New York: Free Press, 1973.

¹¹⁵ See Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*, op. cit., p. 229. That the flight from death is a strong determinative for the mass success of Rapture is also raised by Weber [*Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, op. cit., pp. 228-30]: 'although it would be a too simplistic assumption to interpret the Dispensationalist adhesion only out of the human psychological need for security and escape, the idea of imminent rapture is a potent symbolic hedge against the fear of death. That one might enter the age to come without dying first has been a welcome thought to many people'. On a similar tone, O'Leary [*Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., pp. 163-4] observes that 'the violent wars, earthquakes, persecutions, and plagues of the last days held no terror for those who were convinced that they would be literally snatched away into the air before any of these events occurred; and for at least some of the new premillennialists, the fear of dying was a significant motive in their personal commitment to the rapture as an article of faith'.

¹¹⁶ See Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes towards Death from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Baltimore: JHUP, 1974, pp. 85-107.

¹¹⁷ 'Why are exaggerated blood and death so prominent in every Dispensationalist version of the storyline? The answer is the escapist Rapture of saints from the earth up to heaven. From high above the earth Dispensationalists plan to watch the whole grand spectacle of earth's final war and destruction. The Rapture means that they will escape having to suffer any violence, yet will be able to view it all as it unfolds. Like a front-row seat at a 'shoot-them-up movie', heaven affords spectators the perfect place from which to watch the death of earth. "We will be watching from the balconies of heaven", boasts [the Christian Zionist preacher] John Hagee. Another believer writes, "Thank God, I will get a view of the Battle of Armageddon from the grandstand seats of the heavens. All who are born again will see the Battle of Armageddon, but it will be from the skies". Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, op. cit., pp. 138-9.

¹¹⁸ See Elias Canetti, 'Power and Survival' in *The Conscience of Words and Earwitness*, London: Picador, 1979, pp. 15-16.

¹¹⁹ See Michael Northcott, *An Angel Directs the Storm, Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2004, pp. 68-72.

¹²⁰ See Arthur P. Medel, *Vision and Violence*, op. cit., p. 23; p. 31; p. 37; p. 42; and p. 43.

¹²¹ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God, The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkely: UCP, 2003, pp. 170-71.

¹²² See *ivi* section A.2.

¹²³ See Jason Dittmer, 'The Geographical Pivot of (the End of) History: Evangelical Geopolitical Imagination and Audience Interpretation of Left Behind', *Political Geography*, n. 27, 2008, pp. 280-300.

¹²⁴ Bred MacDonald, 'Jerusalem: Your Thermometer for Measuring Crises', *TheTrumpet.com*, April 16, 2009, available at: <http://www.thetrumpet.com/print.php?q=6110.4509.0.0>.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Quoted in 'Christians United for Israel: New Christian Zionism Lobby Hopes to Rival AIPAC', *Democracynow*, August 15, 2006, available at:

<http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=06/08/15/1326256#transcript>. Spector [*Evangelical and Israel*, op. cit., p. 66] reports that in July 2006, as Israel's military campaign against Hezbollah was raging in southern Lebanon, 'a quarter of million people visited the Rapture Index Web site (www.raptureready.com), which offers updated measurement of catastrophic events that may portend the End Time'.

¹²⁷ The prophecy of Ezekiel's war crowds John Hagee's *Jerusalem Countdown: A Warning to the World*, Lake Mary: Front Line, 2006 and almost every other Dispensationalist pamphlet published since the late Seventies. The Book of Ezekiel [Chapters 38-39] announces the imminent invasion of the Land of Israel by a group of nations led by 'Gog', who is reported to originate from the land of 'Magog' [38:1-2]. US Dispensationlists obsessevily deploy such a prophecy to put current events concerning the Middle East (foremost the Arab-Israel conflict) into End Time perspective. They consider the relentless turmoil and violence in that area as the proof pointing toward the fulfillment of Ezekiel's war.

¹²⁸ The main focus of Hagee's abovementioned book is placed on the nuclear plans of Iran, and on its alliance with Russia, France and Germany - an alliance that would help Satan to achieve his goal of a nuclear holocaust in the Middle East. In a Charisma Magazine's editorial entitled 'The Coming Holy War', Hagee wrote that such a preemptive attack 'should be carried out with nuclear weapons. The coming nuclear showdown with Iran is a certainty. Israel and America must confront Iran's nuclear ability and willingness to destroy Israel with nuclear weapons. For Israel to wait is to risk committing national suicide'. On July 19, 2006, at a CUFI event in Washington, Pastor John Hagee declared that 'the United States must join Israel in a preemptive military strike against Iran to Fulfill God's plan for both Israel and the West (...) a Biblically prophesied End Time confrontation with Iran, which will lead to the Rapture, Tribulation and [the] Second Coming of Christ'. Quoted in Bruce Wilson, 'McCain Courts 'Apocalypse Pastor' Hagee', *AlertNet*, February 23, 2007, available at: <http://www.alternet.org/blogs/peek/48397>.

¹²⁹ I borrowed the metaphor of the Jewish match to light the Evangelical Apocalypse from Robert Weitzel, 'The Children of Palestine and Israel are Cannon Fodder for the Rapture', *Middle East Online*, March 20, 2008, accessed at: <http://www.alternet.org/story/79997/>. In his best-selling Dispensationalist novel, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Hal Lindsey himself describes the State of Israel 'a fuse to Armageddon'.

¹³⁰ For an exhaustive treatment of the catastrophic Messianism undepinning Kahane's 'ideology' see especially Aviezer Ravitzky, 'Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality', op. cit.; Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, op. cit., pp. 211-250; and *Ibid.*, *Brother against Brother, Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination*, op. cit., pp. 180-216.

¹³¹ Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism. Road Map to Armageddon?*, op. cit., p. 250. Almost every informed Dispensationalist views the prospect of a diplomatic agreement over the occupied territories as utterly nonsensical. As Hal Lindsey, the famous author of the End Time pamphlet *The Late Great Planet Earth*, points out: 'as the Bible tells United States, the dispute over Jerusalem and Israel's borders will never be settled by any peace agreements nor any whiz bang diplomatic breakthrough'. Quoted in Colin Shindler, 'Likud and the Christian Dispensationalists: A Symbiotic Relationship', *Israel Studies*, Volume 5, Number 1, Spring 2000, pp. 153-182.

¹³² Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God, The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, op. cit., p. 152

¹³³ Rabbi Ya'akov Ariel, in a speech before the national council of B'nai Akiva in 1979. Quoted in Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 141.

¹³⁴ Quoted in Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism', op. cit., p. 315.

¹³⁵ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 140-41.

¹³⁶ Gideon Aran, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism', op. cit., p. 315.

¹³⁷ This point is made crystal clear especially in Elisabeth Philips, 'We've Read the End of the Book', op. cit., pp. 346-51.

¹³⁸ According to Donald Wager ['Defining Christian Zionism', op. cit.], Dispensationalism derives its low Ecclesiology in part from its historical roots, in particular from the fact of having emerged from anti-state church clergy and theologians in England. At present, similar dissident views find a resonance in the North American Fundamentalist archipelago, mainly in the charismatic, Pentecostal, and independent Bible churches which adhere to Darby's doctrine.

¹³⁹ See *ivi* section 4.5.

¹⁴⁰ See Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, op. cit., p. 41. The same observation - or, more exactly, concern - is raised in O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., p. 166; and Rabbi J. Cook, *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament*, op. cit., p. 243. As already pointed out, that Dispensationalism goes against the atoning meaning of the Cross is further confirmed by the fact that this Jewish-centred belief system envisages, among the various End Times fulfilments, the rebuilding of the Temple and the re-introduction of the Levitical sacrificial cult within its walls - whose existence and religious purposes were, according to mainstream Christianity, obviated by Jesus' redemptive death on Golgotha.

¹⁴¹ Elisabeth Philips, 'We've Read the End of the Book', op. cit., pp. 355-6. Philips interestingly reports that more often than not US Dispensationalist congregations hold onto the so-called doctrine of 'the two advents' - a doctrine positing that the role of Christ drastically varies between His two appearances on earth. During the First Coming, Jesus would act as a sort of religious Messiah bringing 'atonement for sin and establish the spiritual realm of the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men'. At His Parusia, on the other hand, Jesus would turn into a political-military Messiah, which fights an ultimate battle against the forces of darkness, so as 'to establish the physical Kingdom of God over all the earth and the physical Kingdom of David to administer it along with the resurrected believers of all ages'. One might convincingly argue that, insofar as the rhetoric of Christian Zionist leaders like Falwell, Robertson and Hagee is concerned, the latter Christological image outweighs by far the former.

¹⁴² Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze, Sorting Out Evangelical Options*, p. 117. Despite significant exceptions, the vast majority of US Dispensationalists turned their backs on the kind of social involvement underlying the approach of postmillennial Evangelicalism. The hopeless view of the present leaves little room for God, let alone for believers, to work within it. As already pointed out when describing the premillennial rationale, the current order belongs to Satan, and improvement is impossible until Jesus returned to destroy the evil powers and establish His perfect and blissful kingdom. Consequently, as Martin Marty has said, Dispensationalists often give up on the world before God does'. To Northcott [*An Angel Directs the Storm*, op. cit., pp. 59-60], the premillennial Dispensationalist rationale expecting the world to sink deep into a 'mire of immorality, unbelief, and disorder' presents clear implications for Christian action in this dispensation. Those who embrace such a rationale scorn 'all efforts made in the name of religion to correct the ills of society for to inaugurate any programme of social betterment or to the set the [Christian] Church as a whole upon an upward course would be to thwart the divine purpose and to delay the advent of Christ'. Weber [*Living the Shadow of the Second Coming*, op. cit., p. 234] raises the same point about the meaningful correlation between Dispensationalism's pessimistic and fatalistic theological outlook and its non-reformist stand. According to Sandeen (*The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*, op. cit., p. 41), such a correlation was already evident at the genesis of Darby's nineteenth-century movement in Britain. At that time, many Dispensationalists already believed that, 'since the course of history was leading straight to the [final] Judgment, change could only produce a crescendo of corruption. Catholic emancipation, the Reform Bill, democracy, industrialization - the Millenarian opposed them all, but with a sense of resignation born of the knowledge that the world must grow more evil day after day'.

¹⁴³ Philips ['We've Read the End of the Book', op. cit., p. 360] maintains that, as far as Christian Zionists are concerned, 'questions about consequentialism are irrelevant because of the utter certainty of future events. Questions about violence and militarism are irrelevant because the Bible clearly teaches that God has used and will use violence - both human and divine - in the shaping of Israel's destiny. Questions about imperialism are irrelevant as history is destined to culminate in worldwide theocratic empire'.

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 48.

¹⁴⁵ The Dispensationalist justifications of anti-environmentalist policies in light of End Time prophecy are detailed in Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, op. cit., p. 7; Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., p. 182; and Michael Northcott, *An Angel Directs the Storm*, op. cit., p. 67.

¹⁴⁶ The stirrings of Dispensationalism as a force engaged in earthly politics are mainly traceable to Victorian Britain, and, later, in David Lloyd George's and Lord Balfour's foreign policy - in

particular, their backing to the Zionist project for the re-establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. As some studies emphasize, the Dispensationalist leanings of the two politicians should be taken into account, among other factors, to explain the subtle 'semantic double standard' underlying the 1917 Balfour Declaration. In that crucial document granting the Zionist cause international recognition for the first time, the Jewish people's Biblical connection to Eretz Ysrael - which, according to Lord Curzon, 'had terminated 1200 years before' - received a new lease of life by being transmuted into something very close to a Wilsonian principle of self-determination. The same prerogative, on the other hand, was de facto denied to 'the existing non-Jewish communities'. As Weber points out, whilst going in great detail for what concerned the Jews' national aspirations, the Balfour Declaration 'failed to mention the Palestinian Arabs by name, referring to them obliquely as "other sections of the population" or "various peoples and communities" whose rights and status needed to be protected'. Wagner ['Christian and Zion: British stirrings', op. cit.] observes that Lloyd George was perhaps even more obsessed with the Jewish national restoration than Balfour himself: 'Lloyd George's political advisers were unable to train his mind on the map of Palestine during negotiations prior to the Treaty of Versailles, due to the Dispensationalist education he received from his parents on the geography of ancient Israel. As Lloyd-George admitted, he was far more familiar with the cities and regions of Judea and Samaria than with the geography of his native Wales'. This fascinating subject, however relevant, cannot be extensively treated here as this study focuses on the North American case; we therefore refer the reader to Donald M. Lewis, *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland*, Cambridge: CUP, 2009; Paul C. Merkley, *The Politics of Christian Zionism, 1891-1948*, London: Routledge, 1998; Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon: The Rise of Christian Zionism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 98-122; Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, op. cit., pp. 42-66; and Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 109-12, pp. 155-60, and 164-5.

¹⁴⁷ In an interview given to the Bill Moyers Journal, John Hagee stated: 'when Israel became a state in 1948, I remember well sitting at the table in our home and we heard that announcement come over the radio. And my father said, "This is the most important biblical day in the 20th Century. For all the prophets of the Old Testament have now been vindicated and Israel has been born"'. Quoted in 'Christians United for Israel (CUFI) as Barrier to Peace in Israel/Palestine', *Bill Moyer's Journal PBS*, broadcast on November 30, 2007. Transcript available at: <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/11302007/watch.html>.

¹⁴⁸ See Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 213-48.

¹⁴⁹ Shalom Goldman observes that the Dispensationalist reading of unfolding events strikingly coincide with 'the pronouncement Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook made in May 1948, when he hailed the founding of the Jewish state as the realization of the "divine historical imperative of the purified and revealed end of exile"'. See Shalom Goldman, *Zeal for Zion, Christian, Jews, and the Idea of the Promised Land*, Chapel Hill: UNCP, 2009, p. 289.

¹⁵⁰ O'Leary [*Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., p. 178] maintains that 'an announcement of the End of time 'during this generation' diffuses audience expectations by denying them a temporal focus, thereby allowing considerably more latitude for movement, while at the same time forging a generational identity that may endow political acts with sacred significance. When a specific deadline for the Apocalypse is proposed, the audience's excitement and anticipation will tend to focus on the date to the exclusion of every other consideration. If no specific date is offered, audiences accepting Apocalyptic claims will nevertheless experience excitement that can, under some circumstances, be channelled into political action as a way of preparing for the impending End'.

¹⁵¹ See *ivi* section 4.10.

¹⁵² Timothy Weber, *Living in the Shadow of Second Coming*, op. cit., pp. 235-36. In order to account for the politicization of US Dispensationalism in comparative terms, Weber relies on the heuristic model put forward by Jonathan M. Butler in his fine study on Seventh-Day Adventism - 'Adventism in the American Experience' in Edwin Scott Gaustad (ed.), *The Rise of Adventism: A Commentary on the Social and Religious Ferment of Mid-Nineteenth America*, New York: Harper and Row, 1974, pp. 173-206. In keeping with Butler's ideal typical taxonomy, the other two premillennial approaches to outer reality are *apolitical* and *political* Apocalyptic(ism). The former represents the most extreme and least popular category of world withdrawal-renounce: the children of God 'keep aloof from or choose to ignore all political questions and involvements. They curse the world and its institutions and flee from them. (...) With few exceptions, they have isolated themselves from the rest of society or built communes in the deserts or mountains to escape defilement and await the coming of Christ'. Those who belong to the most popular style Butler names as political Apocalyptic(ism) 'become interested and to some extent involved in politics because politics are useful in verifying their worldview. Many premillennialists adopt the rhetoric of political discontent to substantiate their convictions that the world is getting worse, that political institutions are falling apart, and that everything is sliding toward destruction. This is understandable, given their need to show that history is going the way they

think the Bible says it will. (...) Instead of fleeing from the world like the practitioners of apolitical Apocalypticism, they keep one foot within it so that they can prove to themselves and the sceptics around them that everything really is as bad as they say it is. (...) Their actual political involvement, however, is rather peripheral and insignificant. They are more interested in obtaining footnotes for their prophetic studies than in effectively entering the political fray. (...) They need to know about political developments to be up to date; but they rarely go beyond reading about them, discussing their prophetic significance, or showing how they substantiate their predictions. Those who belong in the political Apocalyptic category are interested observers, not regular participants in politics. Since the world system is passing away, there is no reason to try to do much about it'. In the author's opinion, in view of the subtleties they tease out and unpack, Butler's ideal types appear to be far more suitable to address US Dispensationalism's politicisation than the analytical categories provided by the Chicago Fundamentalism Project, as summarized in Gabriel A Almond, R. Scott Appleby and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion, The Rise of Fundamentalism around the World*, op. cit., pp. 151-68, pp. 179-75, and pp. 185-87.

¹⁵³ On the rise of Conservative Evangelicalism within Washington's higher political circles see especially Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again, The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*, op. cit.; Angela M. Lahr, *Millennial Dreams and Apocalyptic Nightmares: The Cold War Origins of Political Evangelicalism*, Oxford: OUP, 2007; Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power, How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite*, Oxford: OUP, 2007; and Esther Kaplan, *With God on Their Side, George W. Bush and the Christian Right*, New York: New Press, 2004. On US Christian Zionism's political outreach prior to and during the Bush administration see especially Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon: The Rise of Christian Zionism*, op. cit., pp. 256-83; Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Politics of the Apocalypse, The History and Influence of Christian Zionism*, Oxford: OUP, 2006; Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Roadmap to Armageddon?*, op. cit., pp. 206-52; and Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*, op. cit., pp. 187-212.

¹⁵⁴ See Donald Wagner, 'Christian Zionism in US Middle East Politics' in Aftab Ahmad Malik (ed.), *With God on Our Side, Politics and Theology of the War on Terrorism*, Bristol: Amal, 2005, pp. 228-34.

¹⁵⁵ On the success of Dispensationalist popular literature within US society and culture see especially Amy Johnson Frykholm's groundbreaking study *Rapture Culture, Left Behind in Evangelical America*, Oxford: OUP, 2004. Lindsey's book can be considered as a mass popularization and at the same time 'a slangy update' of Darby's Dispensationalism. With over 9 million copies sold by 1978, *The Late Planet Earth* became the nonfiction best seller in the 1970s. With some alterations to meet the changed historical scenario, the book continued to sell 28 million copies by 1990. Cf. Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More, Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, op. cit., pp. 5-7. In more recent times, Tim LaHaye's and Jerry Jenkins' *Left Behind Series*, a similar paperback sequel based on Darby's End Time master plot, has sold 50 million copies since the first volume was published in 1995. Given its outstanding success, these novels depicting a climatic end of the world and the violent annihilation of unbelievers at the hand of God's task forces have also been adapted into three action movies and one computer videogame. For a sociological account of this Armageddon-based form of entertainment and its popular success see also Jason C. Bivins, *Religion of Fear, The Politics of Horror in Conservative Evangelicalism*, Oxford: OUP, 2008; Michael Standaert, *Skipping Towards Armageddon, The Politics and Propaganda of the Left Behind Novels and the LaHaye Empire*, New York: Soft Skull, 2006; and Bruce David Forbes and Jeanne Halgren Kilde (ed.), *Rapture, Revelation, and the End Times: Exploring the Left Behind Series*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004.

¹⁵⁶ According to Weber [*Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, op. cit., p. 238], the Dallas Theological Seminary has traditionally represented 'the most important training ground for dispensationalist teachers and pastors'. Dispensationalist schools, colleges, Bible institutes, and seminaries, continues Weber, 'are staffed by large numbers of Dallas men; and man premillennial churches prefer to hire Dallas graduates over those from their own denominational seminaries'. Sizer [*Christian Zionism*, op. cit., p. 119-21] charges that the Dallas seminary 'has probably accomplished more for the cause of Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism than any other institution in the world'.

¹⁵⁷ On the rise of the 'White Evangelical South' in the halls of Washington see especially Anatol Lieven's study *America Right or Wrong, An Anatomy of American Nationalism*, London: Harper, 2003.

¹⁵⁸ See Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., p. 60 and p. 66.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ On close ties between George W. Bush and his Evangelical constituency see especially the documentary 'The Jesus Factor', *Frontline PBS*, broadcast on April 24, 2004, transcripts available at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jesus/>; Gary Scott Smith, *Faith and*

Presidency: From George Washington to George W. Bush, New York: OUP, 2006, pp. 365-414; D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power, How Evangelical Joined the American Elite*, op. cit., p. 42, pp. 46-47, pp. 49-51, and 57-58; and Michael Lind, *Made in Texas, George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics*, New York: New America Books, 2003.

¹⁶¹ See Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy*, op. cit., p. 37, p. 53, and p. 54.

¹⁶² See especially the results of the poll 'Religion and the 2004 Election: A Post-Election Analysis', *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, February 3, 2005, available at: http://pewforum.org/uploadedfiles/Topics/Issues/Politics_and_Elections/postelection.pdf. The rising power of conservative Evangelicals as a voting block, especially for the Republican Party, is also documented in D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power, How Evangelical Joined the American Elite*, op. cit., pp. 15-37; and John C. Green, *The Faith Factor: How Religion Influences American Elections*, Dulles: Potomac, 2010.

¹⁶³ See in particular 'Cinderella at Annapolis', *The Economist*, November 22, 2007, available at: http://www.economist.com/node/10177066?story_id=10177066; and Eli Lake, 'GPO Candidates Voice Wariness Over Annapolis', *The New York Sun*, November 21, 2007, available at: <http://www.nysun.com/national/gop-candidates-voice-wariness-over-annapolis/66791/>.

¹⁶⁴ See 'Christians United for Israel (CUFI) as Barrier to Peace in Israel/Palestine', *Bill Moyer's Journal PBS*, op. cit.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in Shalom Goldman, *Zeal for Zion, Christian, Jews, and the Idea of the Promised Land*, op. cit., p. 305.

¹⁶⁶ Donald Wagner, 'A Heavenly Match: Bush and the Christian Zionists', *The Daily Star*, October 12, 2003, available at: <http://middleeastwindow.com/?q=node/284>. In his assessment of the Jenin incident [*Evangelical and Israel*, op. cit., pp. 226-28], Spector, on the other hand, downplays the Evangelical impact by highlighting, behind Bush's acquiesce towards Israel, first and foremost the maneuverings of *Éminences grise* Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney, and neo-con leading figure Paul Wolfowitz.

¹⁶⁷ See Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong, An Anatomy of American Nationalism*, op. cit., pp. 127-128. Lieven highlighted the immediate influence of Christian Right's theo-political agenda on Capitol Hill as follows: according to the Christian Coalition - the leading grassroots organization of the New Christian Right, '29 senators out of 100 and 125 House members out of 435 voted 100 percent of the time in accordance with the Christian Coalition's own principles in 2001; in other words, more than a quarter of the members of both houses of the US Congress. Of these, 15 senators and 64 congressmen were from the White South'.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. pp. 173-216.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in Anatol Lieven, 'Israel and the American antithesis', *openDemocracy*, October 19, 2004, available at: http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-debate_97/article_2168.jsp. Senator Inhofe was a keynote speaker at the CUFI third annual Washington-Israel summit in July 2008.

¹⁷⁰ On the massive revenues generated by Christian tourism to the Holy Land under Evangelical initiatives and auspices see Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, Roadmap to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 216-19; and Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 214-18. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt [*The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, op. cit., p. 138 and note 111 p. 400] report that in the last decade, the Tour Bus Diplomacy has reportedly generated a turnover in the neighborhood of \$1 billion each year. (...) The United Nations Statistical Division estimates that Israel received \$ 2.8 billion receipts in 2004, and Israeli officials reports that approximately 29 percents of these tourists were US Evangelical Christians'. Further, the authors also note that whilst American Jews called off their trips to Israel after the outbreak of the Second Intifada and September 11, Evangelicals did not.

¹⁷¹ On this aspect see especially the book Grace Halsell wrote after taking part in two of the first 'prophetic tours' organized by Gerry Falwel during the 1980s, *Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War*, Westport: Hill, 1986.

¹⁷² One of the pledge cards on which Christian Zionist donors indicate their level of financial support to the settlement enterprise in the West Bank contains the following statement: 'I want to a part of the fulfillment of prophecy and the courageous effort to return Jewish families to their homeland'. Quoted in Timothy Weber, *On the Road of Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 227. On the same matter see also Colin Shindler, 'Likud and the Christian Dispensationalists: A Symbiotic Relationship', *Israel Studies*, op. cit., p. 175. According to Hagee himself, since its establishment in the early 1990s the Exodus II programme has fundraised \$48,127,240.60 for various 'humanitarian causes' that support the Jewish people, among which stands out the emigration and settlement of Soviet Jewry to Judea and Samaria. Quoted in 'Exodus II', John Hagee Ministries, available at:

<https://www.jhm.org/ME2/Sites/dirmod.asp?sid=&type=forms&mod=Smart+Forms&sfid=1D57124D58B1463B8A2130A7BE58182C&tier=1&SiteID=973F95B9970A4625AB045F5C8E33EF1C>

¹⁷³ See Shalom Goldman, *Zeal for Zion, Christian, Jews, and the Idea of the Promised Land*, op. cit., p. 271.

¹⁷⁴ In view of Begin's electoral victory, Newsweek dubbed 1977 as the 'Year of US Evangelicals'. Quoted in Colin Shindler, 'Likud and the Christian Dispensationalists: A Symbiotic Relationship', op. cit., pp. 153-182.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. Shindler observes that, in a fashion similar to Ben Gurion's approach to Jewish tradition and ideals, Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky always refrained from using 'God's promise to Abraham as an ideological yardstick'. Moreover, although 'he understood the national role of religion in creating the unity of purpose during the millennia of exile', Jabotinsky regarded the Judaic faith as a private matter. This notwithstanding, he laid the ideological premises for a more militant and territorialist understanding of secular Zionism which would later become essential to the Likud identity as a political party, and also facilitate the alignment with US Dispensationalists.

¹⁷⁶ It is commonly recognized that Sharon's decision to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza was dictated by the prime minister's judgement that it was no longer viable for 8,000 Jewish settlers to continue living in one-third of the strip, embattled by 1.3 million Palestinians.

¹⁷⁷ This appears to be the case especially if one considers that 'US Jews are mainly urban, educated, liberal Democrats, nearly half of whom identify as secular'. These American Jews are normally very uncomfortable whenever Israel's divine right to the Land is claimed - even if it is other Jews to do that. On the other hand, those Evangelicals who support the Zionist cause tend to be politically conservative, and unabashed in expressing their love for Israel on Biblical bases. See George W. Mamo, 'Luckier than Moses, The Future of Jewish-Evangelical Alliance' in Nancy Isserman (ed.), *Uneasy Allies?: Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, op. cit., p. 79. Further, the Likud representatives soon discovered that these dedicated Evangelicals were ten times more numerous than the Jews. The birth of an alliance between Dispensationalist Evangelicals and Israeli nationalist right was marked in November 1980, when Prime Minister Begin awarded Reverend Falwell the Jabotinsky Medal, during a ceremony in New York celebrating the centenary of the birth of the founder of Revisionist Zionism. This privileged rapport between Dispensationalists and Likud immediately generated great unease amongst many American liberal Jews. See Colin Shindler, 'Likud and the Christian Dispensationalists: A Symbiotic Relationship', op. cit., p. 155.

¹⁷⁸ On the political implications of the Likud and Evangelical long-term relationship see especially Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 220-34; Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel*, op. cit., pp. 141-57; Shalom Goldman, *Zeal for Zion*, op. cit., pp. 296-308; Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism*, op. cit., pp. 74-75; Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon, The Rise of Christian Zionism*, op. cit., pp. 190-94.

¹⁷⁹ See Ibid., pp. 269-83.

¹⁸⁰ It is worth noting that Hagee is a kind of novelty within the Evangelical Zionist scene, namely in view of his Pentecostal-Charismatic background. As Rachel Tabachnick points out, in 1975, the Pastor abandoned the Assemblies of God, the largest and most influential Pentecostal denomination in the US, to become an influential national leader amongst independent (nondenominational) Charismatic churches. The vast majority of CUFI directors, leaders, and host churches have similar moorings. Hagee and his organization would therefore be representative of a new and ascending trend within American Dispensationalist faith and culture, a trend which today wields remarkable theo-political power, relying on international missionary networks and television-radio worldwide broadcasts. See Rachel Tabachnick, 'Why Christian Zionists Love Jews and Other Notes from the End-Times', *Zeek, A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture*, May 19, 2010, available at: <http://zeek.forward.com/articles/116891/>.

¹⁸¹ See Rachel Tabachnick, The New Christian Zionism and the Jews, A Love and Hate Relationship, *The Public Eye Magazine*, October 19, 2009, available at: <http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v24n4/jews-new-christian-zionism.html>.

¹⁸² See Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., pp. 184-189.

¹⁸³ See Stephen O'Leary and Michael McFarland, 'The Political Use of Mythic Discourse: Prophetic Interpretation in Pat Robertson's Presidential Campaign', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 75, 1989, p. 433-52. 'It is impossible to ascertain exactly when Robertson began to develop political ambitions; what is clearly evident, however, is that his interpretation of Biblical prophecy began to change as he considered a political career. In a series of books and speeches from 1983 to 1987, Robertson gradually departed from the pessimistic scenarios of Antichrist, Soviet invasions, and socioeconomic catastrophe, and began to offer representations of the future that resembled the postmillennial [position]. (...) Invoking the Puritan sense of America's Covenantal destiny, Robertson claimed that the answer to the nation's troubles lay "in a new rise of faith and freedom that will give to every American a vision of hope and opportunity"'. Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., pp. 185-86.

¹⁸⁴ O'Leary maintains that although it remains unknown 'whether the transformation in Robertson's Apocalyptic vision was a deliberate effort to compromise his theology in order to enlarge the base of his political appeal, or whether it resulted from an unconscious effort at self-

justification. What can be determined is that his synthesis ultimately failed to convince two crucial audiences: [the Dispensationalists], who might have been expected to be his natural allies, and the representatives of the secular media'. O'Leary also reports some of the reactions that Robertson's Eschatological twist triggered amid the Dispensationalist camp. Quite poignantly, conservative Evangelical minister Jimmy Swaggart resorted to Biblical infallibility to point out that: 'As much as we would all like to believe what Pat [Robertson] had to say, what are we to do with Bible prophecy concerning the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist, and Armageddon? Tragically, this idea that we Christians can overwhelm the world and transform it into a community of peace and prosperity is remarkably similar to the secular humanist philosophy. Basically, both paint the false picture of utopia constructed by human hands and human minds. To be brutally frank (but scriptural), dark days are coming. Instead of the scenario painted by [reformists], the Bible tells us the very opposite. It speaks of imaginable conflicts and excruciating suffering. Is this doom and gloom? I am sure it is, but it is the truth'. Ibid. p. 187.

¹⁸⁵ As officially enshrined in the organization's website by Robert Stearns (the Northeast Regional Director of CUFI), the primary reason to endorse the Zionist cause would be the war that Israel and America are conjointly fighting against radical Islam for the sake of the 'Judeo-Christian civilization'. In several speeches, Stearns dismissed any Eschatological agenda, assuring 'the audience, and especially the Jews present in it, that the Evangelical support for Israel is not based on theories about the tribulation, or Apocalyptic expectation, or conversionary conspiracies'. Quoted in Peter A. Pettit, 'Christian Zionism from a Perspective of Jewish-Christian Relations', *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, May 2007, Volume 7, Issue 5. A similar argument is almost obsessively put forward by David Brog, CUFI Executive Director, in his book *Standing with Israel: Why Christians Support the Jewish State*, Lake Mary: FrontLine, 2006, pp. 75-78: 'September 11 changed everything. It was the Pearl Harbor of the clash of civilization: it turned a looming civilizational threat into a hot civilizational war. And during wartime, domestic issues take a backseat to the dictates of fighting and winning. As a result, September 11 effected an instant reordering of the priorities of America's Evangelical Christians along with those of most other Americans. Since 9/11, Evangelicals have been focused on the clash of civilizations, and Israel's role in it, with far more intensity than ever before. For many Christian Zionists, especially those who work in the Washington policy world, the clash of civilizations provides their most compelling rationale for supporting Israel'. See also the interview Brog gave to *The National Review Online*, 'Jews and Evangelicals Together, Why some Christians are so pro-Israel', May 22, 2006, available at: [http://article.nationalreview.com/print/?q=ZDFiODgxY2ZkZjNhY2JmMmFjN2RkNDg4MTE0NGVIYzA=](http://article.nationalreview.com/print/?q=ZDFiODgxY2ZkZjNhY2JmMmFjN2RkNDg4MTE0NGVIYzA=:): 'On September 11, 2001, evangelicals recognized along with many other Americans that radical Islam was the greatest threat facing our country and that we were in a war with its proponents. And in this war, Israel is seen as an ally and as the first line of defense of Judeo-Christian civilization. Support for this embattled ally has moved to center stage'.

¹⁸⁶ The argument that the history of past Christian anti-Semitism would leave a burden of responsibility on US Evangelicals spurring them to help modern Israel features in Gary Dorrien, 'Evangelical Ironies, Theology, Politics, and Israel' in Nancy Isserman (ed.), *Uneasy Allies?: Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, op. cit., p. 110; and David Brog, *Standing with Israel: Why Christians Support the Jewish State*, op. cit., pp. 29-38.

¹⁸⁷ Similarly, when a journalist from the Associated Baptist Press asked members of a CUFI delegation whether or not they considered themselves premillennial Dispensationalists, 'they smirked and looked at each other as if to say, "What was that big word?" They insisted that they came to Washington to talk politics, not Eschatology'. Both circumstances are quoted in Sarah Posner, 'Theocrats Deny End Times Theology Is Cause of Their Push for War With Iran', *AlterNet*, July 23, 2007, available at: <http://www.alternet.org/story/57273/>. That CUFI Washington representatives are instructed by their executive board to keep their advocacy for Israel 'strictly political' is also reported in 'John Hagee's Christians United for Israel Conference Mixes End-Times Prophecies With Lobbying', *Jews on First*, July 24, 2008, available at: http://www.jewsonfirst.org/08a/cufi_dc08.html.

¹⁸⁸ Tabachnick ['The New Christian Zionism and the Jews, A Love/Hate Relationship', op. cit.] details this glaring contradiction in many of Hagee's public statements, sermons and television broadcasts. Whilst repeatedly purporting that his support for Israel has 'absolutely nothing to do with Eschatology', over the past decades the pastor has nonetheless built 'an international broadcast audience advertised as reaching 190 nations', namely relying on his Apocalyptic sermons unmistakably echoing Dispensationalist themes and tropes. Hagee often delivers these sermons while standing in front of large panels illustrating End Time prophecies which include the Antichrist – whom Hagee describes as 'homosexual and partially Jewish as was Adolph Hitler' – and the 'Great Harlot of Mystery Babylon', which, according to the pastor, represents instead the Roman Catholic Church.

¹⁸⁹ Hagee's sermon quoted in Sarah Posner, 'Theocrats Deny End Times Theology Is Cause of Their Push for War With Iran', op. cit.

¹⁹⁰ See Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., pp. 77-79.

¹⁹¹ See Sarah Posner, 'Theocrats Deny End Times Theology Is Cause of Their Push for War With Iran', op. cit.

¹⁹² Tabachnick addresses in detail the nature and far-reaching consequences of this ongoing theological permutation within Dispensationalist circles in 'The New Christian Zionism and the Jews: A Love/Hate Relationship', op. cit. The journalist identifies in Johannes Facius, a Dane of German extraction, a leading figure in this novel breed of Charismatic Evangelical Zionists dedicated heart and soul to hastening the coming of the Millennium by 'moving Jews from the former Soviet Union to Israel'. In the manifesto of Facius' organization - the Ebenezer Emergency Fund International, the following rhetorical question is bluntly stated: 'should our response to Biblical prophecy be merely passive or can we actually help in fulfilling what is written?'. According to Tabachnick, many of these Charismatics would complain that the old guard within US Evangelicalism has a far too much 'passive attitude' toward the return of Christ.

¹⁹³ Since the time in which he was still the presumptive Republican candidate, John McCain long courted CUFI leader in light of what happened during his first presidential run in 2000. After he publically labeled Religious Right leaders such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson as 'agents of intolerance for their consistently bigoted and self-righteous views', McCain entirely alienated the conservative Evangelical voting block - that is, the Republican base of southern Caucasian Protestants which made the political fortunes of Nixon, Reagan, and both Bush Senior and Junior. McCain, routinely described by the press as a 'maverick' in light of his political flexibility and opportunism, did not repeat the same mistake twice and initially embraced Hagee's endorsement - even though the pastor is unanimously recognized as 'a more radical theocratic moralizer' than both Falwell and Robertson. See Linda S. Heard, 'The two faces of McCain', *Gulf News*, March 18, 2008, available at:

<http://gulfnews.com/opinions/columnists/the-two-faces-of-mccain-1.91892>; and Gregory Camp, 'Falling off the "Straight-Talk Express"', *The Bismark Tribune*, March 13, 2008, available at: http://www.bismarcktribune.com/news/opinion/mailbag/article_da07803d-52c5-5c23-bf25-1b58052aefe2.html.

¹⁹⁴ On the political impact of these controversial statements during the 2008 presidential campaign see especially 'McCain: Finally renounce Hagee's extremism', *JStreet*, April 20, 2008, available at: <http://www.jstreet.org/campaigns/mccain-finally-renounce-hagees-extremism>; Juliet Eilperin and Kimberly Kindy, 'McCain Rejects Pastor's Backing Over Remarks', *The Washington Post*, May 23, 2008, available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/22/AR2008052203141_pf.html; and 'McCain Admits Hagee Endorsement Was A Mistake', *ABC News*, April 19, 2008, available at: <http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalradar/2008/04/mccain-admits-h.html>.

¹⁹⁵ Sermon reported in the Bill Moyer's Journal, 'Christians United for Israel (CUFI) as Barrier to Peace in Israel/Palestine', *PBS*, November 30, 2007, transcripts available at:

<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/11302007/transcript1.html>. The same line of thought is endorsed by John P. McTernan. The Evangelical preacher and End Time pamphleteer has dedicated an entire book [*As America Has Done to Israel*, Longwood: Xulon Press, 2006] to document and explain the direct correlation between the alarming number of natural disasters and other misfortunes recently befalling the nation and those US foreign policies going against the divine plan for Israel - mainly, by pressuring her to surrender land for peace. In his book, McTernan also hints at the possibility that those 'citizens of New Orleans who drowned in their attics during Hurricane Katrina died because of the removal of the Gaza settlers, who also fled to their rooftops'.

¹⁹⁶ See John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism, Attitudes Towards Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, Oxford: OUP, 1985, pp. 13-23.

¹⁹⁷ Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide, The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, Minneapolis: Seabury Press, 1974.

¹⁹⁸ Ruether explains such a terminological distinction as follows: anti-Judaism would consist in a Christian attitude asserting the not authenticity or subsidiary role of Judaism's religious and theological claims, whereas anti-Semitism would include any form of hostility (either in terms beliefs or actions) perpetrated against the Jews. Ruether also affirms the interrelatedness of the two concepts, the former being prone to resort into the latter. Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Peter A. Pettit, 'Christian Zionism from a Perspective of Jewish-Christian Relations', op. cit.

²⁰⁰ See Richard Fenn, *The End of Time, Religion, Ritual, and the Forging of the Soul*, London: SPCK, 1997, p. 6.

²⁰¹ Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People, Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000*, op. cit., p. 287.

²⁰² See Yaakov Ariel, 'How Are Jews and Israel Portrayed in the Left Behind Series? A Historical Discussion of Jewish-Christian Relations' in Bruce David Forbes (ed.), *Rapture, Revelation, and The End Times, Exploring the Left Behind Series*, London: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2004, pp. 146-7.

²⁰³ Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 129-53.

²⁰⁴ On this regard, M.J. Rosenberg declared: 'what scares me about [John Hagee] is that he sees the Jews and Israelis as part of this divine plan rather than seeing us as people. (...) Israel was established not to fulfil prophecy. It was established after the Holocaust to be a secure refuge for Jews. And to have these thousands and there are hundreds of thousands of [Christian Zionists] out there, it doesn't matter if it's a small percentage of Evangelicals, it's lots of people, who would take me and my friends and relatives in Israel and sort of, like, use us in their religious, you know, in their religious visions, a vision that ends, of course, with the demise of Jews and lots of other people as well. That's the part I find frightening. I mean, and I really do. I think it's unsettling to most Jews'. At that time, Rosenberg was the director of policy analysis for the Israel Policy Forum - an organization advocating a two-state solution to the conflict in the Middle East. See transcripts of 'Bill Moyers talks with Ron Sider and M.J. Rosenberg', *Bill Moyers Journal*, October 5, 2007, available at: <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/11302007/watch2.html>.

²⁰⁵ Michael J. Cook, *Modern Jews Engage in the New Testament*, op. cit., p. 243.

²⁰⁶ See Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze, Sorting Out Evangelical Options*, op. cit., p. 124.

²⁰⁷ Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People, Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000*, op. cit., p. 287.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ The Israel for which support is cultivated is a Christian construction - an Israel that would represent the vanguard of the 'Judeo-Christian civilization' that must be protected, an Israel that would not be conflicted about its own complicit role in extending the conflict with the Arab world and the Palestinian community, an Israel that would understand itself clearly and simply as the fruit of biblical promise and hope. This is the Israel that the Christian Zionists would have, but it is not the Israel that exists today, particularly if one takes 'Israel' to include the whole Jewish people and not only the Jewish state. (...) This conservative Evangelical Israel is once again pressed into service for the benefit of a Christian narrative'. Peter A. Pettit, 'Christian Zionism from a Perspective of Jewish-Christian Relations', op. cit.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Michael J. Cook, *Modern Jews Engage in the New Testament*, op. cit., p. 237.

²¹² See 'White House blasts Robertson's Sharon remark', *MSNBC*, January 6, 2006, available at: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/1072834>; and 'Robertson blamed Sharon stroke on policy of dividing land', *Charisma Magazine*, February 3, 2006, available at: <http://mediamatters.org/research/200601050004>. According to Blumenthal ['The Birth Pangs of a New Christian Zionism', op. cit.], Hagee's End Time pamphlet *The Beginning of the End* would address the murder of Israeli Prime Minister in similar terms, also suggesting admiration for his assassin, the Messianic zealot Yigal Amir.

²¹³ Stephen R. Haynes [*Reluctant Witnesses, Jews and the Christian Imagination*, op. cit., pp. 141-70] argues that the role of 'reluctant witnesses' the Jewish people fulfill within Dispensationalist schemes is an ambivalent dialectic entailing Israel's election, dispersion, restoration and final conversion or annihilation. Gorenberg understands the Dispensational view of Israel as being largely based on 'a double-edged' theological stand: on the one hand, 'it says that divine promises to Jews - to bless those who bless them, to return them to their land - remain intact'. On the other, 'following a classic anti-Jewish stance, it regards the Jewish people as spiritually blind for rejecting Jesus'. See Gershon Gorenberg, 'Unorthodox Alliance, Israeli and Jewish interests are better served by keeping a polite distance from the Christian Right', *The Washington Post*, October 11, 2002, available at: <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Judaism/2002/10/Unorthodox-Alliance.aspx>.

²¹⁴ After thorough consideration of his public statements and sermons, it is almost to deny that Hagee's rhetoric is quite steeped in this logic. Despite boasting that anti-Semitism comes directly from the 'bowels of hell', the pastor has repeatedly demonized the Pharisees - the forefathers of Rabbinic Judaism - in guise of 'sword-carrying legalists' who plotted to have Jesus killed. For a theological discussion on the Jewish collective indictment for deicide - rejection and crucifixion of Jesus - see especially Jules Isaac's classic study *Jesus and Israel*, New York: Holt, 1971; Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide, The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, op. cit.; and, more recently, James Carroll's essay *Constantine Sword, The Church and the Jews*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

²¹⁵ See Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 132-36.

²¹⁶ Ibid. p. 130.

²¹⁷ As Boyer [*Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, op. cit., pp. 208-24] makes clear, 'God would not seek to destroy the Jews, but to chasten them as a father would a wayward child'. According to many past and present Dispensationalists, after the destruction of Jerusalem and

the Second Temple, the Jewish people entered upon 'their longest period of suffering and persecution'. This basically occurred as a result of their amiss in not recognizing the only and true Messiah as he was walking among them. Consistent with this reading, even the Holocaust becomes a 'self-imposed' consequence of Jewish 'spiritual blindness'. On this argument see also Stephen R. Haynes, *Reluctant Witnesses*, op. cit., pp. 160-62.

²¹⁸ Whilst addressing the final and horrendous ordeals of the Tribulation, Dispensationalist Paul Alderman charged that the 'much-beloved, but persistently disobedient, the Christ-rejecting nation must drink the cup of God's wrath to the last drop - even to the point of apparent destruction and extermination'. Quoted in Paul Boyer, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, op. cit., p. 209.

²¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 208-17. That the Antichrist will unleash a final Jewish bloodbath of unparalleled proportion is underscored also in Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, op. cit., pp. 193-99; and Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 149-52. Weber [p. 288 note 98] also provides extensive bibliographical references of Dispensationalist literature purporting this End Time scenario. On the other hand, Spector [*Evangelical and Israel*, op. cit., pp. 175-78] seems to downplay this aspect.

²²⁰ In order to back this claim, Dispensationalists have also traditionally quoted the prophecy of Hosea [13: 16], according to which 'the people of Samaria must bear the consequences of their guilt because they rebelled against their God. They will be killed by an invading army, their little ones dashed to death against the ground, their pregnant women ripped open by swords'.

²²¹ Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, Rockville: BMH, 1974, pp. 347-48 quoted in Paul Boyer, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, op. cit., p. 213.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Rachel Tabachnick, 'The New Christian Zionism and the Jews, A Love/Hate Relationship', op. cit.

²²⁴ Quoted in Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 132.

²²⁵ See Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide, The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, London: Serif, 2005; and Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, op. cit., pp. 4-5, and 145-47.

²²⁶ See Hanna Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Harvest, 1968, pp. xv-xvi, and pp. 358-64; and Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, op. cit., pp. 214-37.

²²⁷ Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 133.

²²⁸ Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, op. cit., pp. 145-47.

²²⁹ Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 137.

²³⁰ Michael Barkun [*A Culture of Conspiracy*, op. cit., p. 53] argues that at present no pamphlet on the Jewish international cabal - whether secular or religious - 'has matched the influence of Pat Robertson's *The New World Order*, which first appeared in 1991. With several hundred thousand copies in print, it turns up in mainstream bookstores and airport paperback racks, as well as at outlets that cater to Evangelicals'. On same the arguments see also Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 206.

²³¹ See especially 'Iraq, The Final War, The Final Dictator, The Final Warning' (Audiobook), *John Hagee Ministries*, 2003. Quoted in Richard Silverstein, 'Odd Couple: The Jewish Forward and John Hagee', *Eurasia Review*, May 23, 2010, available at: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/2010/05/jewish-forward-helps-hagee-wash-away.html>.

²³² John Hagee's foreword to David Brog, *Standing with Israel, Why Christians Support the Jewish State*, Lake Mary: Frontline, 2006, p. xi.

²³³ Ibid., p. 185.

²³⁴ See Gershom Gorenberg, 'Unorthodox Alliance', op. cit.

²³⁵ As Jean-Pierre Filiu's study explains, Muslim Apocalyptic literature has been a vastly ignored or underestimated popular phenomenon in Western academia at least until September 11. After the United States became mired in military campaigns in both Afghanistan and Iraq which were soon perceived as invasions, the production and consumption of End Time fictions has exponentially increased. The majority of these books had been published in Arabic in Cairo, Beirut, Damascus and Kuwait City, selling millions of copies in the wider Muslim and Arabic-speaking world. See Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*, Berkeley: UCP, 2011.

²³⁶ Ibid., p. xiii

²³⁷ See David Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, Syracuse: SUP, 2005, pp. 35-36, pp. 208-9, pp. 221-22 and pp. 231-32; and Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*, op. cit., pp. 83-90.

²³⁸ Ibid. p. xii and p. 107-8.

²³⁹ On the figure of the Antichrist in Islamic Apocalyptic tradition see especially David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, Princeton: Darwin, 2002, pp. 93-120, and pp. 319-21.

²⁴⁰ See David Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, op. cit., pp. 19-49.

²⁴¹ Filiu [*Apocalypse in Islam*, op. cit., p. 29] observes that 'there is an abiding tendency within Islam as a whole to consider widespread impiety as a sign of the end of the world, and to hold that it must precede the ultimate revenge of faith'. According to all modern Islamic

Apocalyptic pamphleteers, notes Cook, a Zionist worldwide dominance under guidance of the Antichrist (and the moral decay, crime, natural disasters and wars such a Jewish unchecked dominance entails) would be part of both the lesser and greater 'Signs of the Hours'. The former consist in a set of extraordinary events designed to 'warn humanity that the End is near and to bring the Muslims into a state of repentance'. The latter include even more severe circumstances ushering into the end of the world, 'at which time the damned will be judged and the blessed will begin to taste the pleasures God has in store for them in heaven'. See David Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, op. cit., p. 8.

²⁴² Filiu [*Apocalypse in Islam*, op. cit., p. 197] captures this unexpected yet alarming convergence as follows: 'Christian and Muslim enthusiasts of Apocalypse all agree on one fundamental thing, namely, the extinction of the Jewish people following reappearance of Jesus on earth. A part of their race will perish in the awful din of Armageddon and the survivors will convert to the religion of the conqueror—Islam in the view of some, Christianity in the view of others. This shared interest in the physical and spiritual annihilation of Judaism introduces a curious complicity between the two Millenarianisms, which in every other respect are resolutely opposed to each other. It is for this reason that the hateful message of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and other Western anti-Semitic pamphlets migrates from one paranoid universe to the other and back again'. Transfigured by revanchist authors on both sides of the apocalyptic divide, it ends up casting a long shadow over a single ominous panorama.

²⁴³ See Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze, Sorting Out Evangelical Options*, op. cit., p. 84 and p. 193. Weber [*Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, op. cit., p. 229] notes that Dispensationalist proponents tend to decimate the progressive view of their postmillennial counterparts by claiming that the world is growing worse rather than better. The wars and crises that have plagued humankind especially since the beginning of the twentieth century would confirm their pessimist portrayal of a world on the brink of self-annihilation. The present state of affairs would therefore refute the postmillennial contention that the trajectory of human civilization is pointing upward. The way in which postmillennial apologists usually argue back is twofold. First, they call for a more serious engagement with the sacred texts, an engagement which must go beyond cheap prophetic clairvoyance. Postmillennialists argue that the decisive factor in any theological determination should be sound Biblical exegeses and hermeneutics, and not some attempts to read the 'signs of the times' from the daily newspapers. Second, postmillennialists stress the necessity to assess the plausibility of their Eschatological views in the historical long run. Their viewpoints 'do not in fact envision the unabated linear process of human progress seen in it by its critics. (...) [Although], taken as a whole, the era since Christ's first advent [is supposed to reflect] the progress the Gospel has brought into human affairs, sin will continue to dominate. Nevertheless, when a longer view of history is substituted for the short view taken by critics, the progressive flow of history emerges. Contemporary adherents of this Eschatology readily admit that we have witnessed certain reversals. Yet, when the horizon of comparison is shifted beyond the short term to encompass the great sweep of history, the pessimistic conclusion of critics evaporates. Thus, postmillennialists ask: "who would argue that the great advances of recent time have not brought, marked improvement to the world? Who would trade life in the present century for life in the ancient Roman Empire?"

²⁴⁴ See Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, London: Abacus, 1995.

²⁴⁵ Weber [*Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, op. cit., p. 227] reports that, by the midpoint of the last century, Darby's doctrine had become the most held Eschatological viewpoint among US Christian Fundamentalism.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 243.

²⁴⁷ Quoted in Ibid., p. 232.

²⁴⁸ See Ibid., pp. 227-44.

²⁴⁹ See especially Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., pp. 67-77; and Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, op. cit., pp. 293-324.

²⁵⁰ Timothy Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, op. cit., p. 232; see also Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze, Sorting Out Evangelical Options*, op. cit., p. 118.

²⁵¹ Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought, An Alternative History of Philosophy*, Princeton: PUP, 2002, p. xi.

²⁵² See Ernesto De Martino, *The End of the World, A Contribute to the Analysis of Cultural Apocalypses*, op. cit., pp. 468-9.

²⁵³ See Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought, An Alternative History of Philosophy*, op. cit., p. 282.

²⁵⁴ See Robert J. Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, op. cit., p. 17, p. 128 and pp. 293-94.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, op. cit., p. 196.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., p. 2.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. pp. 1-20.

²⁵⁹ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Terrorism, Restoring History's Sacred Canopy*, London: Palgrave, forthcoming. I thank the author for letting me read through the manuscript. In Elemer Hankiss' opinion, the tragedy of 9/11 represents perhaps the first time in 'we faced death live'. That morning, millions of viewers all over the world watched 'in real time' as 'thousands of women and men fell, helpless, into their death'. See Elemer Hankiss, 'Symbols of Destruction', *Social Science Research Council After Sep. 11*, available at: <http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/hankiss.htm>.

²⁶⁰ Yale University historian Joanne B. Freeman commented on the 9/11 effect on US national self-understanding as follows: 'Our national world, as we understood it - standing alone, virtually invincible - no longer exists. Foreign powers, however they are ultimately defined, have breached our borders, and there can be no absolute promise that they will never do so again. We must reconstruct our understanding of our nation and its meaning in our lives. We must defend it in its newly recognized vulnerability'. Quoted in Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., p. 17.

²⁶¹ Almost every study on the subject underscores the symbolic import of the edifices hit by the Islamist terrorists. For instance, Neiman [*Evil in Modern Thought*, op. cit., p. 282] charges that Wall Street and Pentagon represented 'at once symbol and reality of Western force, and it is unclear what was more frightening: the collapse of the glaringly conspicuous twin towers or the assault on the impenetrable recesses of military might. Neither visibility nor invisibility provided protection. Watching both shatter so quickly, no one could possibly feel safe. Ordinary people everywhere echoed Arendt: the impossible became true'. According to Gentile [*Ibid.*, p. 16], 'the terrorists were treacherously knowledgeable when they chose their emblematic targets, to inflict not only sorrow for a ruthless carnage on the great Satan, in the name of God, but also a symbolic mortal blow to its power, pride, and prestige, at the same time humiliating the infidel and blasphemous Western civilization which the United States represented. Probably when choosing the targets to attack, the terrorists saw the two towers as symbols of the infidels' religion, so their attack was meant to be a kind of divine punishment against Western idolatry'. Similar arguments are raised in Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terror, Thinking about Religion after September 11*, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

²⁶² See Elemer Hankiss, 'Symbols of Destruction', op. cit.

²⁶³ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Terrorism, Restoring History's Sacred Canopy*, op. cit. For the passage Griffin refers to see Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, pp. 16-17.

²⁶⁴ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Terrorism*, op. cit.

²⁶⁵ On the remarkable surge in various forms of religious spirituality following the 9/11 attacks see especially Jeff Greenberg, Tom Pyszczynski, and Sheldom Solomon, *In the Wake of 9/11, The Psychology of Terror*, Washington: American Psychological Association, 2003, pp. 100-101; and Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., pp. 21-37.

²⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.* p. 22-30.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* That 9/11 represented a historical turning-point capable to overrun the established theodicy is one of the main arguments underlying Susan Neiman's study *Evil in Modern Thought, An Alternative History of Philosophy*, op. cit., pp. xi-xviii and pp. 281-88.

²⁶⁸ Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., p. 31-2.

²⁶⁹ The entire episode is reported and magisterially assessed in its theological implications in Lincoln's study *Holy Terror, Thinking about Religion after September 11*, op. cit., pp. 33-50.

²⁷⁰ Rowan Williams, *Writing in the Dust: Reflection on 11th September and its Aftermath*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2002, pp.1-2.

²⁷¹ See Karen Armstrong, 'Seeing Things as They Really Are' in James Langford and Leroy S. Rouner (ed.), *Walking with God in a Fragile World*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003, pp. 107-20; and Duncan Forrester, *Apocalypse Now, Reflections on Faith in a Time of Terror*, op. cit., p. 55; p. 58-61. The Apocalyptic-revelatory bearing supra-imposed on the 9/11 tragedy is particularly evident in this passage taken from Armstrong's essay: 'we cannot go back to the security that we thought we had enjoyed on September 10 because it was an illusion. Religion is often seen as a panacea, which enables us to look at the world through rose-tinted spectacles. But only a low-grade religion does this; true faith is not an emotionally security blanket nor does it take away the pain that is an inescapable part of the human condition. It demands that we perceive things as they really are. If we cannot be clear-eyed about the things we see, we have no hope of glimpsing a reality that is present but unseen'.

²⁷² Robert Franklin, 'Piety in the Public Square' in Martha J. Simmons and Frank A. Thomas (ed.), *9.11.01: African American Leaders Respond to an American Tragedy*, Valley Forge: Judson, 2001, p. 80. Quoted in Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., p. 34.

²⁷³ See especially the comments on the tragedy by spiritual leaders from around the world and across a spectrum of faiths collected in the following books *From the Ashes, A spiritual Response to the Attack on America*, Washington: Rodale-Beliefnet, 2001; James Langford and Leroy S. Rouner

(ed.), *Walking with God in a Fragile World*, op. cit.; and Donald B. Kraybill and Linda Gehman Peachey (ed.), *Where Was God on September 11?: Seeds of Faith and Hope*, Waterloo: Herald Press: 2002.

²⁷⁴ Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., p. 19.

²⁷⁵ Quoted in Barbara Rossing, *Rapture Exposed*, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁷⁶ See John Gray, *Black Mass, Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia*, op. cit., pp. 124-25.

²⁷⁷ See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, op. cit., p. 45, p. 47, p. 58, and p. 79.

²⁷⁸ For an introductory treatment of the Terror Management Theory see Jeff Greenberg, Tom Pyszczynski, and Sheldom Solomon, 'The Causes and Consequences of a Need for Self-Esteem: A Terror Management Theory' in Roy Baumeister (ed.), *Public Self and Private Self*, New York: Springer-Verlag, 1986, pp. 189-212; and Jeff Greenberg, Tom Pyszczynski, and Sheldom Solomon, *In the Wake of 9/11, The Psychology of Terror*, op. cit., pp. 11-92.

²⁷⁹ Robert J. Lifton, 'The Image of the End of the World: A Psycho-historical View' in Leu Marx, Gerald Holton, Eugene Skolnikoff (ed.), *Visions of Apocalypse, End or Rebirth?*, op. cit., p. 158. Central to Lifton's theories is the idea that a healthy and vital psychic self would be wholly reliant on well-functioning symbolic faculties. The encounter with death imagery would be therefore intimately related to 'de-symbolization' - a process that according to Lifton reaches its paroxysmic state in the clinical cases of paranoia and schizophrenia, where the patient 'senses that his humanity has been taken away from him, eroded by chaos, that he has been turned into a thing'.

²⁸⁰ See Jeff Greenberg, Tom Pyszczynski, and Sheldom Solomon, *In the Wake of 9/11, The Psychology of Terror*, op. cit., p. 22, p. 27, p. 45 and p. 68.

²⁸¹ Lifton's main contention ['The Image of the End of the World: A Psycho-historical View', op. cit., pp. 162-165] is that for anyone who undergoes a process of abrupt de-symbolization embracing an Apocalyptic imagery of death and rebirth would be a way to restore his/her 'disordered self' to a 'healthier state'. Theological worldviews of revitalization, salvation or spiritual cleansing (like Armageddon, 'Judgment Day' or 'end of the world') can accordingly 'provide form, coherence, and shared spiritual experience, in contrast to the isolated delusion system of individual schizophrenic person'.

²⁸² The arguments put forth by TMT social psychologists are perfectly in line with Lifton's psychoanalytical theories [*The Broken Connection*, op. cit., p. 128]: '[When] facing a highly volatile era devoid of meaning, individuals may feel surrounded by death, chaos, and emptiness and therefore yearn for spiritual regeneration. People may wish to leap time and enter a new era free from the anomic terror of death. The mythic response can take numerous forms, mostly eclectic and inchoate; yet sometimes rather elaborate belief systems may emerge, vividly depicting an [Apocalyptic] myth of future salvation'.

²⁸³ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of Eternal Return*, op. cit., p. 118.

²⁸⁴ Hermann Broch, *The Sleepwalkers*, New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964, p. 648. Quoted in Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, op. cit., p. 197.

²⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 196. Analogous readings are raised by Lifton in 'The Image of the End of the World: A Psycho-historical View', op. cit., p. 156. The American psychiatrist repeatedly underscores the anthropocentric essence of the Apocalyptic myth of palingenesis, according to which the faithful is always a survivor - or one of the few survivors - at the centre of celestial recreation ensuing the world's utter obliteration. This, argues Lifton, should be considered a narcissistic response to the sense of overwhelming chaos and disintegration engulfing the individual and his or her psychic self. Survivalist imageries are particularly common in paranoid-schizophrenic cases in which the patient dies with the world, in that his/her sense of inner disintegration includes his/her sense of self and world. He/She reacts symbolically to the disintegration of the self (the losing of his/her centre in the world) by attaching his/her fate to a theological structure of meaning in which cosmic regeneration follows dissolution. Further, he/she narcissistically makes him/herself the only survivor. The firm conviction of having been chosen to outlive the rest of the sinful humanity should be therefore seen as a coactive reaction to the painful anomic process of de-symbolization.

²⁸⁶ Richard Fenn, *Dreams of Glory, The Sources of Apocalyptic Terror*, op. cit., pp. 71-8.

²⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 66.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ The concept of 'running out of time' and its conduciveness to the Apocalyptic solution is treated by Fenn in his previous study *The End of Time, Religion, Rituals, and the Forging of the Soul*, op. cit.

²⁹⁰ Richard Fenn, *Dreams of Glory, The Sources of Apocalyptic Terror*, op. cit., p. 71.

²⁹¹ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, op. cit., pp. 32-36.

²⁹² Richard Fenn, *Dreams of Glory, The Sources of Apocalyptic Terror*, op. cit., p. 77.

²⁹³ For a detailed outlay of the statistical findings see 'Apocalypse Now', *Time*, June 23, 2002, available at: <http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101020701/story2.html>. The poll is quoted by the following studies covering both Christian and Muslim contemporary Apocalyptic

phenomena: Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit.; David Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Literature*, op. cit.; Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*, op. cit.; Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel*, op. cit.; and Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*, op. cit.

²⁹⁴ Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁹⁵ See Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, op. cit., pp. 293-324.

²⁹⁶ Rabbi J. Cook, *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament*, op. cit., p. 234.

²⁹⁷ See 'Apocalypse Now', op. cit.

²⁹⁸ Andrew Delbanco, *The Death of Satan, How Americans Have Lost Their Sense of Evil*, New York: Farrar, 1996, p. 3. Quoted in Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

²⁹⁹ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Terrorism, Restoring History's Sacred Canopy*, op. cit.

³⁰⁰ Elemer Hankiss, 'Symbols of Destruction', op. cit.

³⁰¹ See John J. Collins, 'Eschatological Dynamics and Utopian Ideals in Early Judaism' in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imaging the End*, op. cit., pp. 69-89; and Bruce Lincoln, 'Apocalyptic Temporality and Politics in the Ancient World' in John J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, op. cit., p. 459, p. 463, and pp. 464-66.

³⁰² This is the main contention underlying Richard J. Bernstein's short but nevertheless compelling study *The Abuse of Evil, The Corruption of Politics and Religion since 9/11*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005.

³⁰³ See Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., pp. 79-84.

³⁰⁴ Bush's speech quoted in 'The Jesus Factor', *Frontline PBS*, op. cit.

³⁰⁵ Ibid. See also Jim Wallis, *God's Politics, Why the American Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*, San Francisco: Harper, 2005, pp. 137-49.

³⁰⁶ Bruce Lincoln, *Religion, Empire and Torture, The Case of Achaemenian Persia with a Postscript on Abu Ghraib*, Chicago: CUP, 2007, p. 98.

³⁰⁷ This 'symmetric dualism' is detailed in Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors, Thinking about Religion after September 11*, op. cit., pp. 19-32.

³⁰⁸ See *ivi* section 2.8.

³⁰⁹ See Bruce Lincoln, *Religion, Empire and Torture*, op. cit., pp. 97-107.

³¹⁰ See Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., p. 59

³¹¹ See Bruce Lincoln, *Religion, Empire and Torture*, op. cit., p. xiv and pp. 97-99.

³¹² See Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., p. 67.

³¹³ Gentile [*Ibid.*, p. 68] reports that, just prior to September 11, 'the approval rating of Bush's political conduct continued to decline, dropping to just over 50 percent at the end of June. Then, in the month following the September 11 terrorist attack, his approval rating rose to 87 percent, reaching 90 percent at the end of 2001 after bringing down the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Indeed, although Bush was lost and bewildered on the first day of the attack, a new man emerged from the experience of September 11, transformed by the crisis - resolute, determined, capable of interpreting the nation's feelings, who knew how to comfort, guide, and lead the terrorized Americans, urging them to be united and strong to react to the trauma of the tragedy, and declaring war on those who had declared war on God's democracy'.

³¹⁴ See *Ibid.*, p. 64, pp. 91-94, and pp. 106-9.

³¹⁵ See *Ibid.*, pp. 116-7. On the syncretic character of Bush's political religion and how it skillfully intervened and exploited the post-9/11 climate see also Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong, An Anatomy of American Nationalism*, op. cit., pp. 23-5, pp. 27-28, p. 33, p. 58, and pp. 128-30.

³¹⁶ The classic study on the Millenarian nature of American nationalism is Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation, The Idea of America's Millennial Role*, op. cit. On the same subject see also Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade against Evil*, op. cit; and Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God, Christian Eschatology*, op. cit., pp. 168-75.

³¹⁷ See Emilio Gentile, *God's Democracy, American Religion After September 11*, op. cit., p. 19.

³¹⁸ See John Gray, *Black Mass, Apocalyptic Religion and Death of Utopia*, op. cit., p. 149-61.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ According to Gray's study [*Ibid.* p. 3, pp. 140-42 and p. 154], the main reason of the US disastrous failure in Iraq was an ultimately non-rational basis for policy formulation that forewent and disregarded real-world evidence and put in its place highly unverified intelligence imbued with utopian aspirations.

³²¹ Bruce Lincoln, *Religion, Empire and Torture*, op. cit., pp. 102-3.

³²² Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors, Thinking about Religion after September 11*, op. cit., p. 17

³²³ Paul Boyer, 'When U.S. Foreign Policy Meets Biblical Prophecy', op. cit. On similar grounds, Rossing [*Rapture Exposed*, op. cit., p. 44] charges that 'the rhetoric of Apocalypse popularized by the Left Behind novels and other Dispensationalist texts helped to drive the U.S. march toward war in Iraq'. The hypothesis that Saddam Hussain was studiously subsumed into the Osama Bin Laden's worldwide satanic conspiracy by the Bush Administration so as to stir

Dispensationalist speculations is also mentioned by Richard J. Bernstein in his *The Abuse of Evil: The Corruption of Politics and Religion Since 9/11*, op. cit., pp. 1-17.

³²⁴ See Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, London: Penguin, 2008, pp. 3-21 and pp. 325-40; and John Gray, *Black Mass, Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia*, op. cit., pp. 22-28 and pp. 146-84.

³²⁵ Gray [*Ibid.*, p. 123] defines neo-conservative thinking as 'a mix of crackpot realism and Chiliastic fantasy' which surprisingly originated on the Left, most notably from Leninist-Trotskyite Utopianism: 'Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution suggests existing institutions must be demolished in order to create a world without oppression. A type of catastrophic optimism, underpins the neo-conservative policy to export democracy and free market. Both endorse the use of violence as a condition of progress and insist the revolution must be global'.

³²⁶ See Kevin Mac Donald, 'Thinking about Neo-conservatism' in Aftab Ahmad Malik, *With God on Our Side, Politics and Theology of the War on Terrorism*, op. cit., p. 171. On the 'Israelisation' of American foreign policy under the neo-cons' aegis see also Michael Lind, *Made in Texas, George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics*, op. cit., pp. 140-41; and 'How neo-conservatives conquered Washington – and launched a war', *New Statement*, April 7, 2003, available at: <http://dir.salon.com/opinion/feature/2003/04/09/neocons/index.html>.

³²⁷ See Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel*, op. cit., p. 35.

³²⁸ John Gray, *Black Mass, Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia*, op. cit., p. 33.

³²⁹ See Paul Boyer, 'When U.S. Foreign Policy Meets Biblical Prophecy', op. cit. This reading goes against Lawrence Davidson's thesis as elucidated in his article 'Christian Zionism as a Representation of American Manifest Destiny', *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 157-169, Summer 2005. Davidson sees premillennial Dispensationalism stemming directly from or being closely associated with the longstanding notion of America's Millennial role – i.e. the United States as God's chosen place, the new Israel, the centre of His providential activity, a beacon of freedom, prosperity, and truth for the rest of the world to follow and emulate. In the author's opinion, this reading would downplay or forget the marked anti-historical charge of Armageddon Eschatology, which renders US Christian Zionism incompatible with any project of mundane reformation.

³³⁰ See Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism*, New York: Holt, 2009. Bacevich is a professor of history and international relations at Boston University, and describes himself as a 'Catholic conservative'.

³³¹ Niebuhr's theological and philosophical thought is encapsulated in one of his major studies *Faith and History, A Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History*, London: Nisbet, 1949. On its recent reemergence see especially Arthur Schlesinger Jr., 'Forgetting Reinhold Niebuhr', *New York Times*, September 18, 2005, available at: www.nytimes.com/2005/09/18/books/review/18schlesinger.html; and 'Moral Man and Immoral Society: Rediscovering Reinhold Niebuhr', *American Public Media*, July 8, 1995, available at: <http://being.publicradio.org/programs/niebuhr-rediscovered/schlesinger-centennial.shtml>.

³³² See Benedicta Cipolla, 'Reinhold Niebuhr is Unseen Force in 2008 Elections', *Religion News Service of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, September 27, 2007. According to Cipolla, Niebuhr charged that 'religion is so frequently a source of confusion in political life, and so frequently dangerous to democracy, precisely because it introduces absolutes into the realm of relative values'. Nevertheless, Religion can be 'a source of error as well as wisdom and light. Its role should be to inculcate, not a sense of infallibility, but a sense of humility'.

³³³ That after Obama's election the Dispensationalist option has significantly lost ground within US Evangelicalism (and therefore within the society at large) seems to have been to some extent validated by the findings of a major survey the Pew Forum on Religion recently conducted on the opinions of Evangelical Protestant leaders in America and around the world. See 'Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders', *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, June 22, 2011, available at: <http://pewforum.org/Christian/Evangelical-Protestant-Churches/Global-Survey-of-Evangelical-Protestant-Leaders.aspx>. Sizer summarized the poll results as follows: 'the survey found that only 34% say they sympathize with Israel. A majority says they sympathize either with both sides equally (39%) or with neither side (13%). Among Evangelical leaders from the United States, even fewer sympathize more with Israel (30%) while nearly half (49%) say they sympathize with both sides equally. Similarly only 48% of the evangelicals say the state of Israel is a fulfillment of biblical prophecy about the Second Coming of Jesus, while 42% say it is not. (...) The greatest threat to Christianity is perceived to come from secularism (71%); consumerism (67%); and from sex and violence in popular culture (59%). Only a minority sees the influence of Islam as a major threat (47%) and this is even lower among evangelicals in the Middle East who live as minorities under Islamic rule (35%)'. See 'Is Zionism losing ground among Evangelicals?', *Stephen Sizer Blog*, July 12, 2011, available at: <http://stephensizer.blogspot.com/2011/07/is-zionism-losing-ground-among.html>.

³³⁴ Quoted in James D. Besser, 'Netanyahu Capitol Hill Allies Prepared To 'Run Interference' On Obama', *The Jewish Week*, April 2, 2009, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/02/netanyahu-capitol-hill-al_n_182240.html.

³³⁵ See Bill Berkowitz, 'Hagee Bashes Obama at Christian Zionist Summit', *Scoop News*, July 29, 2011, available at: <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/print.html?path=HL1107/S00347/hagee-bashes-obama-at-christian-zionist-summit.htm>.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ See Rodger Jones, 'On Rick Perry and prayer', *Dallas News*, June 7, 2011, available at: <http://dallasmorningviewsblog.dallasnews.com/archives/2011/06/of-rick-perry-a.html>; and Abe Selling, 'Texas gov. compares Gaza to Mexico, Masada to the Alamo', *Jerusalem Post*, August 13, 2009, available at: <http://fr.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1249418604250&pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull>

³³⁸ See Alexander Burns, 'John Hagee compares Rick Perry to Abraham Lincoln', *Politico*, August 6, 2011, available at: <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0811/60804.html>

³³⁹ See 'Potential 2012 Republican candidates', *BBC News*, May 23, 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-11802187>;

³⁴⁰ See James Besser, 'Palin Ignites New Debate On GOP Support For Israel', *The Jewish Week*, November 25, 2009, available at: http://www.thejewishweek.com/features/palin_ignites_new_debate_gop_support_israel.

³⁴¹ See Jeffrey Goldberg, 'Michele Bachmann's Hazardous Love for Israel', *Bloomberg*, July 18, 2011, available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-07-18/michele-bachmann-s-hazardous-love-for-israel-jeffrey-goldberg.html>; and Kevin MacDonald, 'Michele Bachmann Loves Israel', *Observer*, July 1, 2011, available at: <http://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/2011/07/michele-bachmann-loves-israel/>.

³⁴² See Jeremy Ben-Ami, 'CUFI's dead end', *New Jersey Jewish Standard*, February 18, 2010, available at: <http://www.jstandard.com/content/item/12130>.

Conclusion and Research Implications

The underlying purpose of this dissertation was to consolidate a heuristic approach taking seriously and granting positive standing to the belief systems of Israeli Religious Zionism and US Christian Dispensationalism. To some significant extent, this entailed re-conceptualizing the classic analytical categories social and political sciences usually deploy to address Messianic and Millenarian consensus. In particular, we challenged the idea that such a consensus is nothing but the outcome of deception and manipulation: an elaborated hoax, essentially manufactured by means of brainwashing or anaesthetization of genuine feelings of believers, and/or by capitalizing on their fears and anxieties. It has been argued that, in their assessments, liberal theorists often neglect the critical *pars construens* of these belief systems, which also represents the primary source of their mobilizing appeal: the palingenetic myth of existential renewal. This myth posits that the deficiencies and flaws hindering the current state of affairs can be resolved once and for all, with a comprehensive and all-encompassing transformation leading towards the establishment of a perfected and harmonious order in which every aspect of life emanates from and is organized around transcendental principles.

Despite being little more than a pencil sketch, this utopian vision of future fulfilment is compelling in the present. As far as our two case studies are concerned, we saw how, under particular socio-historical circumstances, the myth of palingenesis was capable of prompting many believers into purposeful action, breaking out of the existing normative constraints, and thereby affecting real impact - an impact which is today visible with the Jewish presence in the West Bank. That neither the Messianic nor the Millenarian breakthroughs have so far come true as expected did not weaken the allegiance to those ideals within the respective religious communities. Nor did such a failure to materialize alter the commitment to foster politically the ultimate dreams of Jewish and Christian renaissance. This evidence should at least entice scholars to approach Evangelical Dispensationalists in the Bible Belt and national-religious settlers in Judea and Samaria in a different way: not as passive, brainwashed dupes of an oppressive cult system or as deranged lunatic fringes, but, rather, as people actively and imaginatively engaged with a cultural material which relates directly to their spiritual needs, which also allows them to put their daily life into meaningful perspective.

Whoever sincerely wishes to grasp those collective belongings that have been traditionally categorized as forms of religious Fundamentalism (sometimes a misleading term because less descriptive than accusatory¹) must undertake the not easy effort to engage with that particular level of sacred imagination, finding constructive ways to speak to the adherents' hopes and fears, and also trying not to meet hostility with hostility. We underscored how methodological empathy also represents the necessary step to tackle the most noxious expressions of such absolutist creeds, especially in terms of violence and radicalization. It goes without saying that assigning to the rationality-based paradigms of social and political sciences the principal, if not the entire, responsibility for such an analytical pursuit will be, to say the least, inconclusive. As this study has tried to underscore, the remarkable resurgence of Millenarian and Messianic movements we are currently witnessing within and beyond the Abrahamic spectrum requires, in addition to liberal heuristic paradigms, a systematic and in-depth assessment from authentically theological perspectives - perspectives which are more inclined than those of secular humanists to afford sacred mythopoeia its own form of argumentative rationality and explanatory power. Being regarded as higher form of criticism, rationality has been historically deployed to debunk the claims of religious myth. However, as brilliantly put by Hans Blumenberg, the non-rational symbolized by myth represents one of the plausible modes of accomplishment of logos.² In keeping with the interpretative standpoint endorsed here, one might as well charge that reason and the mythic grammar of Eschatology have equal standing, both being cultural patterns which can provide humankind with a sense of unity and meaning, more than ever when facing the mounting tide of meaningless chaos.

It has been demonstrated that within these two politicized forms of religion oriented towards the palingenesis of the current order, one can notice a dialectic tension between transcendental ideals and historical reality. Whilst addressing the theo-political aspirations of Israeli Religious Zionism and US Evangelical Zionism, two entwined hypotheses have been tested: if our two case studies showed that Messianic and Millenarian ideals can indeed impact on political reality by virtue of their absolutist palingenetic call, we also documented how being actively involved in the political arena entails to some significant extent abiding or conforming to its rules. In the long run, political praxis based on compromise and negotiation impinges on and even undermines the religiously sanctioned identity, values and goals of the religious movement. In so doing,

attempts to implement Messianic and Millenarian aspirations into earthly reality are bound to engender the premises for spiritual crises and secessionist impulses, which, in turn, might be conducive to radicalization. This last aspect became glaringly evident in the Religious Zionist context, where the compromises associated with the normalization of Gush Emunim's spiritual revolution within the institutional framework of the secular state led directly to the Jewish Underground's antinomian reaction, a reaction which culminated in the terroristic plot to blow up the Dome of the Rock.

In his seminal study, Ravitzky emphasized how the dialectics between Messianic ideal and historical reality is at the heart of Gush Emunim's theopolitical engagement, but at same time generates an unsolvable and far reaching contradiction. Insofar as the cause of Eretz Ysrael in the occupied territories is concerned, this contradiction still produces repercussions, reverberating on both Israel's public life and international standing. On the one hand, as detailed in Chapter V, partial but key intra-historical achievements such as a Jewish return to Palestine, the establishment of a State of Israel, and its territorial acquisitions following the Six-Day War, even when realized by a secular agency such as Zionism, will always evoke the idea of an ultra-mundane fulfilment and therefore maintain Messianic import. This consonance between what has been promised to the Jewish people in the Eschatological future and what has been miraculously accomplished by the Zionist enterprise in the historical present represents the main reason why, in the eye of most members of the MerKaz HaRav Yeshiva, the modern Israeli state represents a metaphysical sanctum, the first flowering of redemption, or the pedestal of God's throne in world. On the other hand, the same Zionist achievements, having now acquired a transcendental standard to live up to, will constantly run the risk of falling short of perfection. In Ravitzky's words, as a partly realized historical entity [*athalta de-ge'ulah*], the secular state will always derive its standing from the fully realized meta-historical ideal - the utopian-futuristic order which still does not exist, the one that has been designated as the ultimate goal of history, and is 'therefore called upon to tailor itself, here and now, to the latter's specifications'.³ It goes without saying that bringing down the perfection of heaven and bestowing it on a human institution can only breed the most disastrous disconfirmations. This appears to be the case especially if one considers that the Zionist state constantly engages in national and international matters by mean of political compromise and negotiation. In other words, acting intra-historically as a secular state rather than that Torah-based theocracy

will always erode or undermine altogether the heavenly status Religious Zionism granted to modern Israel.

As a theo-political movement, mainstream Gush Emunim tried to bridge the gap between what the secular state and society were in reality and what they ought to be in keeping with heavenly standards. It did so by means of an incremental revolution, a continuous progression towards redemption that relied on the not negligible support and resources granted by the Zionist state and its institutions. We explained how the aim of the national-religious revolution was basically twofold: to settle Eretz Ysrael's cause physically through the settlement project in the occupied territories, and to settle the same cause spiritually in the heart of the Israelis by an educational-pedagogical project. If the first ambition remarkably succeeded, the second miserably failed. The failure became fully apparent for the first time when Begin's government decided to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula in partial fulfilment of the peace deal with Egypt. The distance between the Messianic ideal and the historical reality re-widened, seemingly beyond recovery. By giving up parts of Eretz Ysrael to the Arab foes, and succumbing to the will of Western Hellenizers, the Zionist movement - supposedly, the bearer of the Jewish exceptionality and the handmaid of redemption - seemed to have betrayed its holy mission. This painful disconfirmation soon produced a deep theological cleavage within the national-religious camp. Once Gush Emunim's progressive means of Messianic realization proved inadequate, some at the margins of the movement completely disavowed them, and thought that the recovery of wholeness could only be pursued catastrophically. It is worth remembering that the transition from the Naturalist to the Apocalyptic mode which is at the basis of the Jewish Underground plot originated on a cognitive dissonance between the Messianic absolute and historical reality. Ravitzky makes this crystal clear: the intoxicating power of the utopian ideal that 'constantly looms in the believers' imagination as ultimate goal in all its unconditional redemptive significance' undermined both the political legitimacy of the secular state and the religious authority of mainstream Gush Emunim. Paradoxically, the metaphysical elevation of the State of Israel (primarily due to Rabbi Kook's decision to bestow a sacred gloss on it) crippled the standing of both entities in the eyes of the most zealous, whilst giving room of manoeuvre to Etzion and his terroristic attempt to rectify the course of Jewish redemption. 'The wider the gap between the ideal and the real, between the anticipated perfection and the actual implementation, the more questionable is the existing Zionist state [and its

political decisions]'.⁴ The 1984 Apocalyptic twist stemming from a discrepancy between what is historically and what ought to be according to the Messianic absolute set an important precedent for the future, especially in circumstances in which the territorial integrity of Eretz Ysrael in the West Bank will be under diplomatic scrutiny.

Although US Evangelical Dispensationalism represents an altogether different context - mainly because nothing like Etzion's schism has ever occurred within its ranks, similar considerations can be raised in regard to CUFI's ambitions to play a key role in Washington's halls of power in order to foster politically the transcendental cause of Eretz Ysrael in the Middle East. As detailed in Chapter VI, for a movement so concerned with otherworldly salvation such as Christian Zionism, becoming deeply involved in the US lobbying system, electoral politics and foreign policy imposes a difficult revision of its theological worldview - namely, the anti-historical stand of its Armageddon agenda. However justified it might appear to achieve more political purchase and thereby press forward the outbreak of the last age, any process of mundane institutionalisation represents for a premillennial movement a doctrinal oxymoron. The 'middle-of-the-road position' between purely Apocalyptic beliefs and political ideology aimed at attaining duration can hardly be located, let alone maintained. We explained how this contradiction in terms might induce profound repercussions on the religious community. If core ideals of sudden and catastrophic palingenesis were to be sacrificed beyond recognition, diluted into the infinite postmillennial approximations towards the *Eschaton*, the group identity might be so seriously undermined as to create the premises for internal crisis, secessions or disbandment. Even in this case, cognitive dissonance between what ought to be according to the sacred absolute and what really is within the fabric of history might predispose believers toward violence as a means to bridge the unbridgeable.

The 'Theological-Political Fragment', an early writing of Walter Benjamin to which many intellectuals attached enormous relevance, elucidates, just in a few sentences, the major predicament concerning any human attempt to implement the perfection of the Kingdom of God within the fabric of history, or, as defined in the pages of this study, to 'force the End':

Only the Messiah himself completes all history, in the sense that he alone redeems, completes, and creates its relation to the Messianic. For this reason, nothing that is historical can relate itself, from its own ground, to anything

Messianic. Therefore the Kingdom of God is not the *telos* of the historical *dynamis*; it cannot be established as a goal. From the standpoint of history is not the goal but the terminus [*Ende*]. Therefore, the secular order cannot be built on the idea of the Divine Kingdom, and theocracy has not political but a religious meaning.⁵

In keeping with the arguments treated here, we take the German philosopher's hermetic words to mean that the Kingdom of God, the loftiest transcendental ideal not only in Judaism, but also in Christianity, cannot be successfully politicized, ransacked from the world above and implemented in that below. It cannot be established as a goal of human pursuit, simply because only the divine Messiah is supposed to intervene in history to complete its course - as Benjamin puts it, by awakening the dead, defeating one's oppressors and restoring that harmonious whole which has been previously smashed into pieces. 'Nothing that is historical can relate itself, from its own ground, to anything Messianic': this statement alone would represent a mortal blow to the theological worldview and earthly aspirations of either a Kookist or a Dispensationalist.

Most likely, Benjamin derived his fascination in Messianism from his close friendship with Gershom Scholem, perhaps the most authoritative expert on the subject. Commenting on the wave of infectious euphoria that swept over many religious and secular Israelis in wake of the 1967 War, Scholem famously warned that Messianism and politics were two 'parallel lines' not meant to coincide. Whenever the former is introduced in the latter, he added, 'it becomes a very dangerous business' that 'can only lead to disaster', as it did for the Jewish people in the seventeenth century with the rise and fall of Sabbatianism.⁶ Akin to Scholem, historian Jacob L. Talmon charged that whoever forces the Messiah into history will be 'spewed out' by history.⁷ To him, any Promethean attempt to render Messianism into a blueprint for political action, 'far from resolving all contradictions and conflicts into a state of total harmony, increases them, creates new dissensions and leads to an automatic chain reaction of violence, counter-violence and so on'.⁸ Of a similar opinion was also Martin Buber, who, despite cherishing the Messianic ideal as the cornerstone of Jewish spirituality, was fully aware of the risks arising from its politicization.⁹ These warnings notwithstanding, it seems that the two parallel forces can be hardly kept from converging, and not only in the Israeli or the American contexts.

Although this research has several implications, we would like to focus our attention on three major themes:

I) Politicisation of religion and sacralisation of politics

There is an entire area of study to be developed, exploring the communalities and differences between the twin processes of politicisation of religion and sacralisation of politics. At present, the best works in these two fields run in parallel, with neither substantial intellectual sharing nor learning across existing academic divides. This represents a large scholarly enterprise indeed, not least because it would entail addressing many lacunae, whilst trying to tie solid inter- and cross-disciplinary knots. But, that makes it all the more important to stake out the agenda and to make a start. Ideally such an undertaking should draw together theologians, historians, political scientists, and other specialists in the Humanities and Social Sciences, who are willing to confront the most common stereotypes and methodological shortcomings that have so far undermined many scholarly investigations about the endless modalities in which religion and politics can overlap and intermingle with each other.

II) Muslim Apocalypticism

We saw how the purging of targeted scapegoats adjudged to be evildoers plays a huge role in the Messianic expectations of the most zealous amongst the national-religious settlers, and equally represents an essential symbolic device affording the End Time economy of US Dispensationalism to operate. As far as John Hagee and other prominent Christian Zionists are concerned, the Manichean division of humanity into forces of darkness and light has not dissolved with the end of the Cold War. As a venomous and undifferentiated whole including Palestinians, Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, and Iran, Islam has taken up exactly where Soviet Communism left off, with theology substituting ideology as a driving force. Today, many American Evangelicals believe that the Islamofascist programme of world domination has in mind 'the Saturday people' as an appetizer, to be thereafter followed by 'the Sunday people'. Accordingly, Israel represents the last 'fire wall' between the Satanic Islam and the Judeo-Christian civilization. Quite alarmingly, these views are mirrored back by the supposed enemy. In the wake of the Bush Administration's war on terror, a rising number of Sunnis in the Middle East started nurturing similar

paranoid fears, which they conveniently frame through the Apocalyptic prism. Akin to their Jewish and Christian Fundamentalist counterparts, these Muslims are the most enthusiastic supporters of Huntington's thesis purporting an unsolvable clash of civilization, this time pitting the heroic warriors of Allah against the dissolute West, especially its most demonic forces, Israel and the USA. This opposition appears to be endowed with Eschatological dynamism: the most acclaimed Apocalyptic pamphleteers of Cairo, Damascus, Ramallah, and Amman predict that a Zionist coalition of Evangelical Christians and Jews, led by *al Dajjal* (the Muslim rendition of the Antichrist figure), would trample *Al Haram al Sharif* in Jerusalem, triggering the climatic events leading towards the final triumph over the occupying and polluting infidels and the establishment of an Islamic Millennium. In keeping with the prophetic script, this will be centred on a renewed Abbasid Caliphate, whose reinstitution is also one of al Qaeda's strategic long-term goals.¹⁰

Analogous speculations are common currency within Iranian Shi'ism. Although a first outburst of Apocalyptic fervour dates back to 1979, when Grand Ayatollah Khomeini took over the Reza Shah Pahlavi's regime with the Millenarian prospect of a perfect theocracy, in the last two decades, one could attest to a burgeoning phenomenon of public piety, mainly focused on the Jamkaran shrine, near the city of Qom. Here thousands of pilgrims gather every year, to pray for the intercession of their Mahdi or Twelfth Hidden Imam, whose imminent return is believed to bring about peace and universal justice. As both Abbas Amanat's and Said Amir Arjomand's recent studies well document, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad studiously capitalized on such a mass Messianic devotion to defeat the incumbent reformist president Mohammad Khatami in June 2005 and, later, to consolidate in populist terms his confrontational stand in foreign policy - the centrepiece of which is Ahmadinejad's frenzied rhetoric against Israel and the US, the 'Christian-Zionist Crusaders' bent of destroying the Islamic Republic.¹¹ To date, Muslim Apocalypticism has not received academic attention adequate to the momentous salience this issue has recently acquired in regional and international politics. If only a few studies have taken these phenomena seriously, none of them has yet comprehensively addressed how they intersect with and feed on opposing but nonetheless similar Jewish and Christian End Time aspirations.

III) Theo-political revivalism and Modernity

Further interdisciplinary and cross-regional analyses should address the undeniable correlation between the worldwide resurgence of politicized religion and the cultural fragmentation brought about by globalized Modernity. This perhaps represents the widest and most significant research implication. As early as 1991, Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, the directors of the Fundamentalist Project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, were amongst the first to submit that the interjections of religious Fundamentalism into world politics were less regressive than creative responses to the embattlement engendered by secularizing Modernity. Commenting on the surge of revivalism in various world religions, other scholars like Bruce Lawrence, Roxanne L. Euben, Michael J. Mazarr and Bassam Tibi detailed how present day Fundamentalists should be seen as 'Modernist' rather than anachronistically 'Traditionalist', mainly in view of their attempts to 'evaluate tradition in light of Modernity, and selectively retrieve salient elements of both so as to put forward a sacred concept of political order, be this domestic or global'.¹² However, aside from these exemplary explorations, Modernity has not yet been exhaustively examined from the perspectives of those who find it morally objectionable or even pernicious. Furthermore, current scholarship has often forgotten that such perspectives are always creatively responsive.

Following the arguments put forward with great clarity by Gideon Aran, we emphasized how the 'theology of the profane' of Abraham Isaac Kook was an ambitious and intellectually sophisticated attempt to come to terms with the challenges posed by the emerging inroads of Western Modernity - above all, Nationalism, Socialism, and Zionism. Not only did the rabbi's original theology acknowledge the successes of contemporary secularity, but also glorified them. Yet, in so doing, Kook aimed at readjusting the balance of power in favour of the Jewish tradition. His was foremost 'an effort to rescue religion from crisis and to return to it its previous supremacy; by sanctifying the profane environment, religion could appropriate a tempting and threatening rival'.¹³ The Messianic doctrine developed by the spiritual father of Gush Emunim provides an early but nonetheless paradigmatic example of a syncretic Modernist creed in that it brought Jewish Orthodoxy up to date by nationalizing it, and at the same time, by sacralising Zionism, it rendered modern Nationalism into a key issue for Judaism. While discussing Uri Ram's idea of a 'McJihad synthesis', we explained how the ethno-religious tribalism in

the East Jerusalem and the West Bank is reactive to and dialectally connected with the achievements of neo-liberalist Modernity as visible in Tel Aviv.

That contemporary Fundamentalism flourishes by drinking from the fruitful springs of the culture it nominally rejects and fights against is evident even in the Dispensationalist heartland. As detailed in Amy J. Frykholm's seminal study, Darby's doctrine took the fore at a moment in which 'conservative Protestants felt a decline of cultural power'. The relativism of values dovetailed with mass consumerism, large-scale immigration, rapid cultural change resulting from capitalist expansion and scientific discoveries impinging on many Evangelical communities, eroding their traditional frameworks of sacred meaning. Accordingly, the escapist belief in a Tribulation followed by a selective Rapture became a way for many American Christians to reassert some sort of control over an unsettlingly new reality. The paradox consists in that Dispensationalists soon became strikingly proficient in using the advantages, tools and outlets that only secular Modernity could afford them to propagate Darby's virulently anti-modern and anti-worldly message. As Frykholm points out, the character emerging from present day *Left Behind* fiction is 'no longer an ostracized, alienated, and old-fashioned' Fundamentalist, but someone who is 'wealthy, technologically savvy, and exerts a remarkable cultural influence'.¹⁴ The quintessentially Modernist essence of every Fundamentalist revolt against Modernity should be the object of more systematic and extensive scholarly enquiry, to be carried out comparatively and beyond the limited scope of the Abrahamic tradition. Furthermore, casting light on the complex cultural negotiations whereby these phenomena construct and maintain their identity - apparently, not only by withdrawing from the surrounding godless world, but also engaging it on their own terms - might represent a useful point of departure for comprehending the modes and overall goals of their political militancy.

Aside from Religious Zionism and Christian Dispensationalism, there is an impressive number and variety of Chiliastic phenomena demonstrating that the Apocalyptic myth of transition is one of key cultural hinges upon which our civilization still turns. The near universality of this myth also suggests that, time and again, some will believe to be living on the *limen* separating two qualitatively different eons. Under the impression that the grandest transfiguration is about to occur, they will be tempted to usurp the divine prerogatives, so as to force a closure on the old and decadent order, enter the

new and blissful age, and thereby solve forever the human predicament. According to Carl Gustav Jung, the coming of the Apocalypse was not just a prophetic prediction. It was first and foremost an inexorable psychological law. The violent shattering of the world as it has been, followed by its reconstitution in a no longer perfectible form, along with the coming of a deity to judge, reward or punish humanity were all key features of a major archetype. In Jungian terms, an archetype is a primordial psychic pattern composed of a complex and powerful network of closely interrelated images.¹⁵ It is crucial to note that Jung understood the archetype not as a simple outpouring of our symbolic faculties, as we argued in the first chapter of this study, but rather a dynamic agency, almost 'a living subject endowed with a certain intentionality and autonomy'.¹⁶ To account for the full scope and force of such qualities, Jung compared the archetype to 'an old watercourse along which water of life has flown for centuries, digging a deep channel for itself. The longer it has flown in its channel the more likely it is that sooner or later the water will return to its old riverbed'.¹⁷ Once it 'constellates' in its archetypal form, that is, as a dynamic and autonomous agency, the Apocalypse will be capable of extending from an individual ego to another, eventually to encompass the whole collective unconscious, and align the latter with its own purposes.¹⁸ It is almost impossible not to conclude this dissertation by quoting Frank Kermode's most memorable question, as reported in his obituary published in *The Guardian* on August 21, 2010: 'Why is it, Kermode asked, when the alarm clock by our bed goes "tick-tick", the brain insists on hearing "tick-tock"? The reason, he suggested, is our human addiction to beginnings (and even more addictively) endings: "tick is a humble Genesis, whereas tock represents a feeble Apocalypse"'.¹⁹ Even for Britain's most influential literary critic, the human mind is inescapably drawn to Eschatological thinking.

¹ See especially Marc Juergensmayer, *The New Cold War, Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, Berkeley: UCP, 1993, pp. 4-6.

² See Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, Cambridge: MITP, 1985.

³ Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., p. 138.

⁴ See Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, op. cit., pp. 128-29.

⁵ Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (ed.), *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, Volume III, 1935-38*, Harvard: Belknap, 2002, p. 305.

⁶ See David Biale, 'The Threat of Messianism: An Interview with Gershom Scholem', *The New York Review of Books*, August 14, 1980.

⁷ Quoted in David Ohana, 'J.L. Talmon, Gershom Scholem and the price of Messianism', op. cit., p. 175.

⁸ Ibid. p. 179

⁹ See David Ohana, *Political Theologies in the Holy Land, Israeli Messianism and its Critics*, op. cit., pp. 128-34.

-
- ¹⁰ On this subject see especially David Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, op. cit., pp. 126-49; and Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*, op. cit., pp. 121-40.
- ¹¹ See Abbas Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2009, pp. 221-51; and Said Amir Arjomand, *After Khomeini, Iran Under His Successors*, Oxford: OUP, 2009, pp. 156-59.
- ¹² See Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God, The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1990; Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror, Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism*, Princeton: PUP, 1999; Michael J. Mazarr, *Unmodern Men in the Modern World, Radical Islam, Terrorism, and the War on Modernity*, Cambridge: CUP, 2007; and Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism, Political Islam and the New World Disorder*, Berkeley: UCP, 1998.
- ¹³ See Gideon Aran, 'The Father, the Son and the Holy Land', op. cit., pp. 299-302.
- ¹⁴ See Amy J. Frykholm, *Rapture Culture, Left Behind in Evangelical America*, op. cit., pp. 18-20 and pp. 34-36.
- ¹⁵ For a synthetic yet exhaustive treatment of the Jungian understanding of archetype see Carl Gustav Jung (ed.), *Man and His Symbols*, London: Aldus Books, 1964, pp. 66-92.
- ¹⁶ See Edward F. Edinger, *Archetype of the Apocalypse, A Jungian Study of the Book of Revelation*, New York: Open Court, 1999, pp. 1-14.
- ¹⁷ Carl Gustav Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London: Routledge, 1958, p. 23.
- ¹⁸ See Edward F. Edinger, *Archetype of the Apocalypse, A Jungian Study of the Book of Revelation*, op. cit., pp. 2-4.
- ¹⁹ John Sutherland, 'Fierce Reading', *The Guardian*, August 21, 2010, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/aug/21/frank-kermode-tribute-john-sutherland>.

Appendix: The Apocalyptic and Violence

Man is at one and the same time the most frightened and frightening being, because he is the only creature to be aware, obsessed and terrified by that obscure abyss towards which the torrent of life eternally precipitates.¹

In this study we interpreted religious imagination as a symbolic worldview shielding humankind from the terror of history and the passage of time. By giving reason to human suffering, religion renders it sufferable. Without an anchoring to the 'really real', humanity might lose itself in the meaningless Maelstrom of profane existence. The Apocalyptic might be seen as most anthropocentric response to man's inadequacies: a response that is part theodicy and part hermeneutics. As an archetype of time-renewal, the Apocalypse is a strategy to resolve the tensions engendered by the unsettling awareness of human transience and finitude. 'Despite all the evidence to the contrary produced by the chaotic torments of history', the believer is reassured that his or her presence on the planet will turn out to matter, that is, 'to make the ultimate difference in that drama in which the purpose of existence will finally be revealed'.² In its promise of eternal afterlife in presence of God, that symbolic strategy defeats the true core of evil: death. Further, the Apocalyptic interprets present deficiency in light of a future fulfilment in which the causes of that deficiency are permanently eradicated. The current moment of crisis is re-systematized within that cosmic struggle against the forces of evil that has been unfolding since the dawn of creation. That struggle will soon culminate in a final ordeal in which God vindicates the righteous victims against their oppressors and rewards them with timeless bliss.

The dangers and ethical downfalls inherent to this religious doctrine have been extensively raised and addressed. D. H. Lawrence was one of first ones to denounce the Book of Revelation, the quintessential Apocalyptic composition, as a literary expression of hatred, envy, and revenge, which, 'in every country and every century', has intensively appealed only to 'second-rate minds'.³ According to Bernard McGinn, Lawrence's lifelong interest in the Apocalypse was nevertheless dominated by an underlying ambivalence:

Lawrence was at once appalled by the Apocalypse and fascinated by it - appalled by what he took to be its appeal to vengeance as the ultimate religious motivation, fascinated by the way in which the work summed up the collective religious values that had dominated Western society.⁴

Nowadays, academia seems to be still entangled in a similar predicament. A peculiar fascination for the Book of Revelation, or other key Apocalyptic texts,

is matched by a mixture of distaste, apprehension or condemnation for the entire revelatory doctrine.⁵ Scholarly assessment, generally from disciplines other than theology, often identifies the genre as a hotbed of violence on the account of the fact that it presents a God-sanctioned catalogue of plagues, disasters, and destructions. Further, the Apocalyptic narrative is seen as a clear incitement for vengeance and retaliation, as, within its scheme, one's opponents are demonized as the ultimate embodiments of evil, whose extermination is deemed necessary for ushering in the new age of bliss and harmony. Today, the fiercest attack on the Apocalyptic is mounted from the realm of social psychology. The revelatory doctrine based of the triple pattern of crisis, vindication and judgement has been stigmatized as the paradigmatic expression of the 'paranoid gestalt', the distinctively prone-to-violence mindset at the basis of each and every religious or ideological Fundamentalism.

A.1 The Paranoid Gestalt

From a clinical perspective, paranoia might be defined as a chronic personality disorder whose primary symptom is that of enmeshing severe persecutory obsessions with megalomania.⁶ The paranoid is an embattled soul, confronting a hostile world of 'heated exaggerations'.⁷ Cosmic forces are always aligned against him, with the specific purpose to persecute or inflict a relentless punishment. Those who suffer from this disturbance, observes Richard Hofstadter, regard sinister scheming and satanic plots as the real and only driving motives in life occurrences: history itself is 'a conspiracy, set in motion by demonic forces of almost transcendent power'.⁸ The threats perceived by the paranoid are not exclusively directed against his persona, but can also put at risk an entire nation, a culture or a way of life whose fate concerns many others. It is this self-absorbing conspiratorial delusion which nurtures a corresponding idea of righteous omnipotence. Within the paranoid mindset, a sense of present persecution, fear and powerlessness have an equal share with a dream of future glory. Charles Strozier defines this peculiar coalescence between opposite feelings as 'negative grandiosity':

One is helpless and beaten down, but this keen sense of victimization (no one has suffered as much as I have in the face of this persecution) readily turns positive in its most malignant and psychotic form. That is, I am actually greater than my tormenter; I am the creator; I am Jesus, and so forth.⁹

As psychological ideation, a 'paranoid gestalt' might gain momentum

whenever the 'affective-cognitive organization' in individuals is under attack, undermined, or humiliated. This 'narcissistic injury' in one's self-esteem might generate, in turn, a degree of 'narcissistic rage', which can be effectively channelled against a 'malignant other' who stands in the way between the subject and the realization of his megalomaniacal plan – and therefore must be eliminated.¹⁰ The transition from victimization to violence (against an ultimate embodiment of evil) appears to be an intrinsic potential, an always present possibility which stems directly from rigidly Manichean and absolutist overtones. Given what is at stake, the paranoid does not envisage mediation or trafficking with the demonic forces. Being constructed as utterly unappeasable, nothing but a complete annihilation of opponents or enemies will do.¹¹

Violence intrinsic to paranoia is 'counter-phobic' in character. It is deemed necessary and rightful to strike out the enemy before he attacks. Even once he turns into an aggressor, the paranoid still identifies himself as a persecuted victim. His decisions are taken 'reluctantly', and as a last resort; his actions are just and carried out in 'self-defence'.¹² The demonic other is the only moral and material responsible of every violent outbreak. The enemy is ontologically culpable. When such culpability is not evident in the nature of things, it must necessarily be assumed. The paranoid, argues Elias Canetti, proclaims to the world the need to act pre-emptively in order to diffuse an impending threat: 'it is always the enemy who started it. Even if he was not the first one to speak out, he was certainly planning; and if he was not actually planning it, he was thinking of it; if he was not thinking of it, he would have thought of it'.¹³ By taking action against the menacing tormentor for the sake of self-protection or other general philanthropic concerns, the paranoid perceives himself and his deeds as a 'vehicle of salvation'.¹⁴ His violence is morally justified because it heals and redeems a moribund world engulfed by evil.¹⁵ However, a final appeasement for the obsessions haunting the subject never comes because

the demand for unqualified victories leads to the formulation of unrealistic goals, and since these goals are not even remotely attainable, failure constantly heightens the paranoid's frustration. Even partial success leaves him with the same sense of powerlessness with which he began, and this in turn only strengthens his awareness of the vast and terrifying quality of the enemy he opposes.¹⁶

Another reason that makes paranoia almost untreatable in psychotherapeutic terms is that the source of dread embattling the patient is nothing but an externalization of his own 'evil'. The paranoid mechanism and its constructions are driven by inner need rather than by experiential reality. Hofstadter and

Strozier, along with a vast number of other psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, observe that the awful and disgusting other (or conglomeration of others) seems in many ways to count as a 'projective image' of those aggressive, destructive and disowned aspects, which are subconsciously rooted in the impaired 'psychic self' of the paranoid. Fears, anxieties, hatred, guilt, vulnerability or unacceptable desires can therefore be cathartically discharged, by their re-casting onto a designated 'stereotypical target', which can assume either individual or collective form.¹⁷ Vamik D. Volkan comments that, the enemy being a mere projective image of the paranoid's unwanted psychic elements and drives, it always subsists as a sort of 'unconscious likeness', or 'reverse correspondence', which binds the two together and simultaneously alienates them.¹⁸ The patient appreciates his malignant persecutor better than anybody else in light of the fact that the latter 'grows out of confused but deeply personal knowledge'.¹⁹ The psychological relationship that the paranoid maintains with the feared and loathed idol is therefore complex and ambiguous. It implies a need for separation, difference, and distance but also nurtures a sense of unconscious connection.²⁰ Nevertheless, as the process of externalization takes its own course, the other becomes progressively stigmatized and de-humanized as a demonic entity whose conspiracies pose a serious threat to the subject's integrity, purpose and beliefs. By intensifying this "projective feedback loop" between inner trauma and outer imago of evil, the paranoid can achieve a sort of feeble yet never definitive psychic relief.²¹

As may be inferred even from this, striking analogies seem to link the paranoid gestalt to the Apocalyptic imagination. In the first edition of his 'The Pursuit of the Millennium', Norman Cohn was one of the first scholars to draw a significant parallel between mental pathology and Chiliast phenomena, focusing his attention on the 'defining' tension between sense of present victimisation and delusions of future glory. According to the historian, if one was to adequately account for the violent Millenarian outbursts scourging medieval Europe, 'the psychic content of the fantasies which have inspired them' should be not underestimated:

These fantasies are precisely such as are commonly found in individual cases of paranoia. The megalomaniac view of oneself as the Elect, wholly good, abominably persecuted yet assured of ultimate triumph; the attribution of a gigantic and demonic powers to the adversary; the refusal to accept the ineluctable limitations and imperfections of human existence, such as transience, dissention, conflict, fallibility whether intellectual or moral; the obsession with inerrable prophecies systematized misinterpretations, always gross and often grotesque; (...) and the ruthlessness directed towards and end which by its very

nature cannot be realized - towards a total and final solution such as cannot be attained at any actual time or in any concrete situation, but only in the timeless and autistic realm of fantasy. All these are symptoms which together constitute the unmistakable syndrome of paranoia.²²

The synergetic correlation between paranoia and Apocalypticism might be further reinforced by the fact that, apart from claiming to be in a special relationship to the divine, the paranoid spokesman 'traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, and whole systems of human values'. The destruction of the current state of affairs prepares a wholesale palingenesis of which the paranoid is the chosen vessel.²³ Fuller contends that the two mindsets might aid and abet each other as they both portray the enemy as being 'not simply a human adversary but, rather, the very incarnation of cosmic evil'.²⁴ Both the paranoid and the Apocalyptic imageries, argues Strozier, are founded on a 'survivalist narrative', according to which all humanity deterministically points towards a sort of collective ordeal, annihilating the wicked persecutors and redeeming a selected quota of righteous.²⁵ Finally, akin to many Millenarians, the paranoid believes himself to be standing at a turning point in history, on a threshold between ages: a liminal status of unparalleled emotional intensity, in which 'time is forever running out'.²⁶ The psychological trauma, observes Strozier, enforces on the paranoid 'a new kind of salience about time, bending it back on itself. Suffering in the past continue as though in the present, denying the past as it is relived, seeking fitfully and in despair a future with hope'.²⁷ The paranoid therefore does not experience an evenly segmented and predictable [Cartesian] chronology, but its qualitative opposite. He lives a rhapsodic and quintessentially kairotic time, similar in many aspects to the 'jetzeit' of the Apocalypse: the propitious and unique revolutionary 'breach' in the temporal continuum, in which action is necessary, 'as it is no ordinary moment but one pregnant with opportunity for fulfilling the destiny of humankind'.²⁸

The validity of any heuristic device applying paranoia's cognitive-affective patterns to the study of Millenarian beliefs and practises - or, more generally, to the study of any other social phenomenon - stands or falls by the plausibility of the assumption that 'the underlying dynamics that give rise to the paranoid gestalt in groups' can be soundly deduced from 'a psychological understanding of the genesis of the same gestalt in individuals'.²⁹ Some may regard this founding analogy as unwarranted in light of a major epistemological weakness, namely the already mentioned 'black box' dilemma.³⁰ Nonetheless, in recent times a host of remarkably confident psychologists and psychiatrists re-

validated on almost positivist grounds Cohn's contested idea that, especially in moments of historical unrest, the paranoid gestalt might constellate within the 'collective self', becoming a key mobilizing force in social deviance. The Apocalyptic cast that this force acquires is seen as exceeding the scope of a mere statement of faith. More than a self-standing belief-system, the Apocalyptic would serve as a sort of 'subsidiary catalyst', which draws together and further integrates the paranoid psychodynamics already operating within the group. With their narcissistic and libidinal charge, the Eschatological visions of boundless grandiosity and *revanche* over current oppressors would provide the in-group members with an added 'dimension of unity, purpose and direction'.³¹ It is interesting to note that, from this psychoanalytical perspective, the two frameworks (clinical and the religious) are conflated to the extent that they become almost interchangeable. The paranoid gestalt would be inherently Apocalyptic, whereas the Apocalyptic imagination pathologically paranoid.³² This perfect juxtaposition between quite different human ideations allows Strozier and other contributors to his edited study to unreservedly charge that the Book of Daniel along with that of Revelation constitute the 'first coherent statement' of the paranoid gestalt humanity ever wrote.³³ The God featuring in those canonical texts is a 'divine terrorist' who 'sits on his mighty throne with a smirk of paranoid certitude as all sinners and nonbelievers are cast in a lake of fire'.³⁴

A.2 Creative destruction

The Apocalypse is a cataclysm endowed with meaning, as its final purpose is shattering for the sake of a new and perfected creation. The saving power arises from the depth of deficiency, by envisaging a renewal which is paradigmatically accomplished by an all-encompassing ordeal. In this sense, the Apocalyptic resolves the human crisis, by intensifying it and making it resonate with a cosmic dynamic of death followed by re-birth.³⁵ This theme is so pervasive in human mythopoeia as to be a common denominator in the world's major religious traditions. In the fifteenth century b.c.e., Zoroastrian Eschatology posited that at the end of the limited time – or the age of mixture between good and evil – a purifying fire (*ekpyrosis*) will cleanse the present dispensation of the wicked, to establish of a Millennium of bliss in which the righteous will dwell, eternally freed from the dominion of time.³⁶ The Iranian ideal of a final catastrophe through which the old perishes and the new springs

forth would leave an indelible mark in Western religious thought. That ideal was promptly incorporated in the Sibylline Oracles, in Stoicism, and later in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism.³⁷ In the Second Epistle of Peter [3:6-14] and the Book of Revelation, it is God who foreordains the wholesale annihilation of the cosmos so as to root out evil once and for all, and inaugurate the new heaven and the new earth wherein the faithful will live forever in peace, without blame. The plan is accomplished by means of devastating wars, deluges, fire raining down from the skies, heat melting down the elements, and other divine portents. The idea of purifying flames remains however the ultimate Apocalyptic archetype of creative annihilation: 'evil must be totally "consumed" – actively and painfully destroyed, reduced to ashes, to nothingness – before the world can be truly renewed'.³⁸ This is perhaps the reason why, in the eye of many contemporary Millenarians, the flames of the Book of Revelation and those of a nuclear holocaust so easily converge: they claim that nuclear weaponry was created by God through human agency to purify and renovate.³⁹

It is essential to bear in mind that, in its classic formulation, the Apocalyptic is a doctrine of non-violent resistance. It is God who has the monopoly over the triple pattern crisis, judgement and vindication. In times of endurance and trial, that doctrine was meant to provide the faithful with a powerful source of hope, promising an imminent reversal of fortunes. Although no room is left for human initiative, the idea that destruction represents the 'other side' of redemption has nevertheless set a dangerous precedent. Many detractors of the Apocalyptic purport that violence is not a mere accident, but a by-product: an inherent proclivity stemming from its being quintessentially 'consequentialist'. The Apocalyptic fully subscribes to a means-end calculus as the envisaged renewal is 'a goal so desirable that the annihilation of everything else on its behalf may feel justified'.⁴⁰

The palingenetic myth is so appealing because man is a 'meaning-craving' creature, who is aware of his finitude, and therefore fervently seeks to neutralize it symbolically. At a first glance, the Apocalyptic represents a remarkable theodicy: a plausibility structure which transcends death by promising a continuity after it and on the loftiest level of meaning. Once bound to the cosmic rhythm of destruction and rebirth, 'the believer is suddenly made to feel his life newly purposeful and in touch with eternity'.⁴¹ But, along with that, the Apocalyptic also offers the almost irresistible chance to share in the divine prerogatives of destroying in order re-create: an awesome power that, so

as to purify, must rid the present age from what defiles and corrupts. That chance is so overwhelmingly intoxicating because it enables mankind to turn a condition of inbuilt deficiency, weakness and despair into a surge of life-power or even cosmic omnipotence. Potential for violence stems from the fact that, once in 'co-ownership' with God's transformative powers, man can act vicariously, granting himself the divine right to induce the ordeal and discriminate between who is to die and who is permitted to survive:

Whether through killing or martyrdom, death becomes equated with immortality. Any such killing or dying is understood as part of God's control over history. In deciding who lives and who dies, zealots are invoking what they claim to be God's project. The principle of death followed by rebirth becomes regeneration through killing and dying. (...) Simply acting under God's grandiose canopy, a believer's most prosaic everyday struggles can be enlarged and ennobled as part of a glorious and sanctified realm of destruction and redemption.⁴²

Whenever boundless might is enmeshed with the sense of having been appointed to carry out a redemptive mission, it becomes effortless for humankind to mistake its Promethean hubris for God's will, and therefore to rationalize hatred, envy, and thirst of vengeance into a self-validating truth. Apocalyptic violence is by default consummated in good faith, always acted upon the victim on behalf of universal values. Especially when the killing of a vast number of human beings is carried out with the therapeutic purpose of healing the entire world.⁴³

Throughout human history, Millenarian or Messianic sects have rarely moved from the Apocalyptic vision to the Apocalyptic violence in order to hasten that catastrophe ushering into the final fulfilment. This transition might occur under a constellation of complex and unique circumstances which is almost impossible to frame into a coherent predictive system.⁴⁴ One recurring factor, which may trigger the shift from a passive to an active stand, remains a deep-seated 'sense-making-crisis' engulfing the religious community. In the eye of the believers, this anomic crisis might be connected to a real or perceived threat putting at risk the life, identity or normative worldviews of the religious community. The prompts to force the end stem from an attempt to anticipate the events, especially when their unfolding seems to be out of control: the faithful are convinced that, by deliberately heightening the crisis through violent action, they are able to accelerate its resolution – a resolution also implying the demise of the present dispensation and the advent of the new age of bliss, harmony and justice. Their Eschatological longings abandon the realm of passive contemplation and prayer, to turn into a blueprint for creative

destruction: 'the Millenarian-Messianic revolt against the existing society thus assumes the cathartic, cleansing quality of a holy war against a sinful and corrupt world fought by those charged with a divine mission to be the interpreters of divine will'.⁴⁵

In 1969, in the midst of the Cold War's nuclear proliferation hysteria, Hanna Arendt warned about the ethical downfalls and great hazards arising whenever a means-end category is called upon to orient human action:

The very substance of violent action is ruled by the means-end category whose chief characteristic, if applied to human affairs, has always been that the end is in danger of being overwhelmed by the means it justifies and which are needed to reach it. Since the end of human action, as distinct from the end products of fabrication, can never be reliably predicted, the means used to achieve political goals are more often than not of greater relevance to the future world than the intended goals.⁴⁶

Once deployed to motivate political action, the Apocalyptic logic seems to exceed the scope of a mere consequentialist outlook, turning its risks of into necessity. Not only does its dialectics legitimize and institutionalize violent means in order to accomplish greater ends, it also sanctifies them. Redemptive violence may therefore become an absolute value per se, without the need of a greater goal that justifies it. The danger inherent to Apocalyptic thinking is that, under particular circumstances, violence might be 'deified', or better, 'fetishised' as the ultimate source of collective regeneration and at the same time the decisive indicator of spiritual achievement. Whenever man attempts to master the Apocalyptic fire which destroys for the sake of renewing, the end is instantly overshadowed by the means. As a transcendental fulfilment, the *Eschaton* [the goal] will always be exclusive prerogative of God, out of human reach despite the efforts towards its materialization. Only the means are fully accessible to Promethean hubris, and can therefore be glorified as an ersatz source of fulfilment. Nowadays man has matched the God of the Apocalypse in terms of destructive portents. Since the end of the Second World War, weaponry exists that could transform the world-annihilation vistas into dreadful reality.⁴⁷ That annihilation, however, would probably not be followed by celestial recreation (with the survivor at its centre), but only by ultimate oblivion.⁴⁸

A.3 Cycles of violence

No one ever forgets a sudden depreciation of himself, for it is too painful. Unless he can thrust it on to someone else, he carries it with him for the rest of his life. [The community] as such never forgets its depreciation. The natural tendency afterwards is to find something which is worth even less than oneself, which one can despise as one was despised oneself. It is not enough to take over an old contempt and to maintain it at the same level. What is wanted is a dynamic process of humiliation. Something must be treated in such a way that it becomes worth less and less, as the unit of money [does] during the inflation. And this process must be continued until its object is reduced to a state of utter worthlessness. Then one can throw it away like paper.⁴⁹

If each defeat and humiliation breed a revanchist desire in the human soul, the Apocalyptic keeps this desire simmering until it boils over. Past injuries and current grievances are not relinquished, but cherished and capitalized for a dream of future retribution. In a glorious day of reckoning, the wounded community will be finally able to recover old losses, settle all scores, and triumph over its persecutors. Yet, this *dénouement* never matches expectations, and the result coming out of the climatic battle against the ultimate enemy is always provisional. At each and every attempt at vindicating old offences, new demand for revenge comes into being, turning present victims into future perpetrators. Once mankind implements its logic into history, the Apocalyptic by no means resolves disharmonies, but increases them. Rather than a realm of bliss and perfection, it creates new suffering and dissension leading to an automatic chain-reaction. Another layer of hatred is added to an already existing one, and this recent addition merely sets the premises for further brutalities.⁵⁰ As Primo Levi reminds us, 'from violence only violence can be born, following a pendular action that, as time goes by, rather than dying down, becomes more frenzied'.⁵¹ On account of the endless cycle of violence it promotes, the operative logic of the Apocalyptic is at the same time self-fulfilling and self-perpetuating. It is self-fulfilling because, ensuring that the future will resume the worst of the past, the Apocalyptic tends to accomplish the disasters it predicts. It is self-perpetuating because, through functioning, the Apocalyptic sets the foundations that will assure its future successes.⁵²

According to Freud's notion of 'narcissism of the minor differences', hostility between individuals or group identities is more likely to arise when these, rather than being markedly distant, share a common ground.⁵³ In the case of the 'Abrahamitic triangle', that common ground might be offered by the Apocalyptic matrix. On Eschatological grounds, the three monotheist faiths can be considered as lying on a sort of cultural continuum. Christianity superseded Judaism and, in turn, was superseded by Islam. Early Christianity drew

extensively from the Hebrew Messianic lore, adapting and re-functionalizing that borrowing according to its own soteriological purposes. Coming at the end of the continuum, Sunni and Shiite Islam had the privilege to benefit from a vast and longstanding Apocalyptic repertoire.⁵⁴ Nowadays, the most sectarian and extreme Islamic clerics entertain and promote amid their followers the hope in the eternal Mahdi (or twelve hidden Imam). This End Time saviour shows remarkable resemblances with the Jewish and Christian counterparts. The Mahdi is expected to set in motion a course of events ultimately leading to the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the violent regeneration of the entire world into a Muslim empire.⁵⁵ It is believed that, after a period of physical endurance in the 'state of occultation', the Mahdi will manifest himself to vindicate the oppressed, lead a *jihad* against the infidels, restore justice and faith to their original form while eradicating moral corruption, and establish a worldwide Islamic caliphate.⁵⁶ Instead of a 'clash of civilizations' between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, one might consider the hypothesis of a sectarian dispute amongst different branches of 'a single civilization', traditionally steeped in Apocalyptic imagery and beliefs. That extremists belonging to the three monotheistic faiths have developed variations of the same pattern of crisis, judgment and vindication might render their mutual antagonism more probable, especially when this sibling rivalry capitalizes on historical precedents and/or traumas.⁵⁷

A.4 Purgatory complex

An ultimate ideal of harmony, homogeneity, and purity might entail, as its corollary, a certain amount of constraint, which is deemed necessary to bring those qualities about and protect them from difference, ambivalence and contradiction. The quest for an absolute order requires an absolute power, which extirpates that which cannot be absorbed and held under its control. In its radical forms, Millenarianism may be distinguished by a voluntaristic élan forcing reality into an idealized scheme. On the ground that they both pursue the transmutation of the heterogeneous into a perfect and harmonious status, alchemy and Millenarian-Messianic utopias coincide: the former attacks the irreducible in nature, the latter the irreducible in history.⁵⁸ As previously noted, any 'ordering' attack on the modern world cannot extinguish its unsettling ambivalence and complexity, but rather generates more and, in so doing, it creates further need for comforting 'great simplifications'.⁵⁹

If totalistic uniformity is the price exacted for salvation, vindication and eternal bliss, this levelling coercion may be directed against the unbelieving world that surrounds the community, but also and more often applied inwardly, on the in-group members and their personal lives. The Apocalyptic imagination often induces one to believe that his own everyday struggle against evil and sin is part and parcel of a larger cosmic drama of salvation, a sort of anticipation of the final confrontation with Satan or the Antichrist. The same Eschatological vision promising a final triumph over death and current oppressors can be effectively deployed to mount an attack on the believers' unique selves. This homogenizing attack aims at obliterating all markers of their unprecedented and idiosyncratic 'complexity'. According to Richard Fenn, a path of righteousness and spiritual improvement must be undertaken in order to make one's soul adequate for the End Time reward:

Some religious traditions indeed predicate Apocalyptic hope on a lifetime of self-abnegation and self-mortification, requiring the renunciation of all individual markers of uniqueness, significance, and distinction. In return, the Apocalyptic imagination offers a wide range of narcissistic satisfactions, from vindication to triumph and revenge, but these will finally come only to those who are willing to surrender to the divinity all grounds for invidious distinction. (...) The Apocalyptic tradition has therefore spawned a variety of disciplines of the soul that require penance, renunciation, and asceticism in order to prepare the soul for the Final Judgment. (...) The believer is to purify the self of every thought and feeling that will not pass muster on the last day. (...) Only those who have preserved in righteousness will be finally be set free from the burden of time. (...) While anticipating the joys of seeing oneself and one's people survive as other are being eliminated, individuals must curtail their desires, achieve virtue, and pay a tribute to those in authority.⁶⁰

The positive relationship between the sense of impending End and the enforcement of collective 'purgatorial practices' was already evident amid the Jewish sect of the Essenes, an obscure Chiliastic community whose members are generally recognized as the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls. There is a sort of a meaningful link between two key religious texts organizing the community's worldview and self-contained, almost monastic lifestyle. As can be inferred from the War Scroll, the Essenes were convinced they were living in between ages, on the brink of a cosmic transfiguration.⁶¹ Soon a final battle led by the Sons of Light would have defeated the Sons of Darkness, bringing about the Messianic Age. In another fragment called the 'Rule of the Community', a numismatic figure known as the 'Teacher of Righteousness' preaches penitence, humility and chastity.⁶² That fragment also enshrines a complicated set of purity laws and initiation rituals to which every member was supposed to abide. As O'Leary observes, the same sense of unspecified Eschatological imminence

places 'heavy psychological demands' upon contemporary Christian advocates of premillennial Dispensationalism. The idea that Jesus may return at any time turns out to be a remarkable 'incentive for personal holiness', which transforms personal faith into 'a mechanism of ethical purification':

The lack of a specifically anticipated date for the Lord's return strengthens the 'purifying' motive of Apocalypticism by keeping the believer in a perpetual state of excitement that requires a constant awareness of guilt and repentance. Premillennialism places heavy psychological demands upon believers: enjoined to practice self-purification in anticipation of the final Judgment, they have to consistently hold their intense anticipation in check and turn their attention to organizing their everyday lives by planning for a future that most believe was unlikely at best.⁶³

The purpose of these Millenarian ethics devoted to self-purification might also be that of marking an 'ecological discontinuity' with the surrounding moribund secular environment, in an attempt to create an alternative countersociety, which, with its virtuosity and harmony, represents a sort of living anticipation of the post-Apocalyptic world.⁶⁴

The Apocalyptic imagination shares with all myths the attribute of reconciling life's inherent contradictions and deficiencies with ultimate meaning. But, one of the side effects of its compelling 'plausibility structure' might be that of promoting a terrestrial lifestyle based on suffocating 'moral orthopaedics'. By terrifying believers into repentance, submission and religious conformity, Apocalypticism can therefore turn into one of the most efficient tools for re-socialization, regimentation, and control. In other words, what Fenn defines as the 'disciplines of the soul' are the major contributors to that 'totalistic ethos' which many see as the hallmark of Millenarian phenomena.⁶⁵ If, as a form of self-scathing medieval piety, the 'purgatory complex' becomes a chronic frame of mind imposing relentless tribulations on the faithful, the paradox consists in the fact that, in order to obtain a foretaste of immortality and avoid Hell after death, one might chose to implement the proverbial chastisements of the latter in life.

Conclusive remarks on the relation between the Apocalyptic and violence

Investigating the exact relation between the Apocalyptic and violence is a task discouragingly complex and fraught with controversies. At a first level of understanding, this might depend on the very stylistic essence of this literary genre. By definition, every Apocalyptic composition is arcane, full of secret allegories, and to the greatest extent symbolically allusive. Accordingly, the text

might resist any attempt to impose a single authoritative reading, but rather instantiate a cleavage of competing viewpoints.⁶⁶ Either exegetically or hermeneutically speaking, it is highly problematic to 'pin down one original meaning' of a given Apocalyptic passage and then use that meaning to evaluate [and eventually sanction] later or previous interpretations.⁶⁷ As revelatory message, the Apocalyptic empowers its readers, by functioning as a sort of mirror on which, 'with impunity', they can project and simultaneously re-discover their own 'interpretative preconceptions'.⁶⁸ That a meaning of a religious scripture can be almost identical with its interpretative applications might present us with major problems whenever those applications sanction intolerance or exclusionary thinking.

Quite tellingly, scholarly approaches tackling the potentials for violence engrained in the Apocalyptic originate, to a striking degree, from fields of knowledge other than theology – namely, sociology, psychology, history of ideas, and anthropology. The terms by which the religious doctrine is frequently dismissed by such disciplines are not very dissimilar from those deployed by H. D. Lawrence: the Apocalyptic would exclusively appeal to second-rate minds as a channel to articulate their frustrations, envies and cries for vengeance. Its dream of ultimate triumph would convey only the 'undying will-to-power in mankind', and at the same time sanctify whichever means is deemed necessary to implement that will. On the other hand, a vast number of theologians reject such criticism, by claiming that secular analyses misconceive or belittle what represents the true 'normative core' of this revelatory doctrine. In its original formulation, the Apocalyptic would be a message centred not on man's power, but on God's. Further, the fundamental human reaction such a message should evoke is passive awe, and not arrogance, let alone enticement to hasten the End through acts of creative destruction. Within the normative paradigm of mainstream Christianity, the pious souls are requested to wait patiently for the final *dénouement*, bearing in mind that the most important climax in history – the one with the highest redemptive value – had already occurred in Christ's incarnation, passion, and resurrection. The crucified Messiah refused armed struggle as a way to inaugurate the Kingdom of His Father [Matt 26:53; John 18:36]. Frequently, Jesus' sacrificial love along with His teaching of forgiveness and inclusiveness as recounted in the Gospels are deployed to counter the vengeful Lamb, so central to the Book of Revelation.

These secular and theological approaches to the relation between violence and the Apocalyptic seem to be equally inadequate. By seeing violence as its

deterministic outcome, the secular scholarship tends, at best, to downgrade this important form of human spirituality to a pathological enticement to social deviance or, at worst, to fall prey of the same Manichean and totalistic preconceptions that at present blind so many religious Fundamentalists. Academia still lacks a broad conceptual framework offering the prospect of cross-disciplinary synergies and collaborations (in particular, a solid interface between social sciences and theology-biblical studies) in understanding the persuasive appeal and mobilizing potency of the Apocalyptic. Ideally, such a heuristic framework should address Messianic and Millenarian phenomena with 'methodological empathy', that is, by taking seriously the theological outlook at the basis of the actors' worldly involvement.

On the other hand, although many believers abhor it, redemptive violence is the by-product of a specific mindset, which has something to do with the Apocalyptic imagination. If mainstream religious denominations refuse to recognize and confront this evidence, more terror and violence inspired by such an imagination might come. To deny that violence is one of the possible developments stemming from the Apocalyptic is as complacent as contending that violence is its unique and necessary outcome. This denial on part of many mainstream theologians ossifies the debate, missing out precious opportunities to confront a very nuanced and complex matter, whose resurgence in the three monotheistic faiths might present a primary source of conflict. In his latest study unpacking the Eschatological sources of redemptive violence, Richard Fenn does not exclusively direct his polemic against the 'propagandists of the Christian Right who have raised Apocalyptic tensions to a dangerous level since 9/11' or on their Islamic counterparts. He also questions mainline Catholic and Protestant denominations that maintain the same doctrine in 'a respectable place' in their canons and liturgical practices. Until and unless the poisonous Apocalyptic visions harboured within the respective orthodoxies are acknowledged and sanctioned, argues Fenn, liberal and moderate churches cannot legitimately 'sneer at' the Manichean and totalistic attitudes of religious Fundamentalism:

It is too easy to denounce the radical right in the USA for keeping alive the most chauvinist, nationalistic, violent, and Apocalyptic aspects of the Christian faith. It is also far too easy for liberal theologians to propose existential or pragmatic reinterpretations of the Apocalyptic literature which turn the fight with Satanic forces into a continuous, personal, and mundane process. (...) So long as Apocalyptic hopes in a bloody and vindictive exorcism retain the colour of orthodoxy, liberal and moderate churches will have nothing to say about the

militant and self-destructive aspects either of the Evangelical Right or their Islamic counterparts.⁶⁹

The possibility of a connection between the Apocalyptic and violence remains the 'elephant in the room', a huge inconvenience many still refuse to address without either fully condemning or absolving. In her seminal study about the Book of Revelation, Adela Yarbo Collins succinctly pointed out the main issue at stake. To the biblical scholar, the Apocalyptic would be a spiritual message calling for non-violent resistance in times of trial, whose symbolic core nonetheless ranges from confrontational to violent:

The Apocalypse was written to avoid violence rather than to encourage it. The faithful are called to endure, not to take up arms. The violent imagery was apparently intended to release aggressive feelings in a harmless way. Nevertheless, what is cathartic for one person may be inflammatory for another. The same holds for various historical situations.⁷⁰

The same spiritual message might elicit different reactions depending on who is seeking to interpret it, and on the historical-social circumstances in which it is interpreted.⁷¹ One may assume that the core of the matter is not what the Apocalyptic text actually says, but what the readers say that text says. The primary perspective from which tackling potentials for violence would therefore be focused uniquely on people, motivations and acts that translate religious symbols and images into events. As a prism to interpret reality and act upon it, the Apocalyptic would be a neutral canvas on which believers project their own ideas, idiosyncrasies and flaws. Yet, this conclusion might equally drive us towards a fruitless relativism of values and attitudes, and deal only with one side of the problem. In order to provide solid correctives, our analysis should therefore include the nature of the symbolic medium itself, addressing responsibly which Apocalyptic tropes, archetypes or mythic images might, under a host of facilitating factors, be conducive to redemptive violence.

Where all-encompassing visions of redemption are at stake, bigotry and exclusionary thinking always remain latent possibilities. Those who define themselves as thinking and acting on behalf of an ontological truth have an innate inclination towards violence. Coming to terms with 'homo religious' means recognizing that ultimate concerns are not always negotiable within the humanist or rationalist frameworks of meaning defining liberal societies.⁷² This does not lessen the need to attempt such negotiations. To prevent disappointments one should however not come ill prepared. Before critically engaging with Apocalyptically inspired forms of religious militancy, it is necessary to master the theological ideas and principles that, even in

misconceived or adulterated fashion, sustain and nurture them. The Apocalyptic should be therefore approached *sine ira et studio*. Further, the 'ultimate battle' ahead for those who advocate more inclusive and peaceful ways to face the test of time seems to be foremost exegetical and hermeneutical. In order to challenge the scriptural basis for redemptive violence, a serious work of interpretation and contextualisation is required over those controversial passages that so easily lend themselves to be manipulated. Critical interpretation and contextualisation should serve as necessary premises to setting normative boundaries around those controversial passages, or at least to highlight more benign readings of them. Needless to say, the difficult task to 'pin down' one or multiple authoritative meanings primarily falls onto mainstream religious denominations, that is, those 'interpretative communities' which might be more likely recognized as the legitimate bearers of the tradition.

Finally, it is worth noting that the 'empowerment of the reader' that the Apocalyptic so distinctively provides might also play in favour of more inclusive exegeses and hermeneutics. The same text, which, under the strain of a literal-futuristic reading, predicts an imminent Armageddon followed by the divinely ordained extermination of one's foes, can also point towards the opposite direction, that is, the definitive repudiation of redemptive violence as a means to transcendental fulfilment. In his last study 'Battling to the End', René Girard submits that the authentic message of the Book of Revelation has been constantly missed or misunderstood. The last book of the Christian canon does not prophesize a future act of wrath, vengeance or vindication stemming from God. Nor does it promote the idea of a 'divine terrorist' who 'sits on his mighty throne with a smirk of paranoid certitude as all sinners and nonbelievers are cast in a lake of fire'. It rather acknowledges and unmasks the violence that humankind has been unleashing and amassing on global scale.⁷³ Believers who recognize this kind of Apocalypse are therefore confronted with a twofold choice: 'either steel [themselves] to the coming of much worse, or find some alternative to the ritualized religious-political construction of the Other that feeds redemptive violence'.⁷⁴

¹ Guglielmo Ferrero, *Power: the Invisible Genes of the City*, Milan: SugarCo, 1981, p. 36 (in Italian).

² Ted Daniels, 'Charters of Righteousness: Politics, Prophets and the Drama of Conversion' in Stephen O'Leary and Glen McGhee (ed.), *War in Heaven, Heaven on Earth, Theories of the Apocalyptic, Millennialism and Society*, London: Equinox, 2005, p.11.

³ In his last book *Apocalypse* published in 1931, D. H. Lawrence recognized in John of Patmos 'a shameless power-worshipping pagan Jew, gnashing his teeth over the postponement of his grand destiny'. He defined Revelation as 'repellent composition', resounding with 'the

dangerous snarl of the frustrated, suppressed, collective self, the frustrated power-spirit in man, vengeful'. The last book of the Christian canon was the work of a 'second-rate mind' that would only appeal to other second-rate minds: '(...) strangely enough, unintelligible as it is, it has no doubt been the greatest source of inspiration of the vast mass of Christian minds - the vast mass being always second-rate - since the first century, and we realize, to our horror, that this is what we are up against today; not Jesus nor Paul, but John of Patmos'. Cf. D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, London: Heinemann, 1931. On a similar note, George Bernard Shaw dismissed the book as 'a curious record of the visions of a drug addict which was absurdly admitted to the canon under the title of Revelation'. Quoted in Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, Oxford: OUP, 1990, p. 4.

⁴ Bernard McGinn, *Apocalypticism in the Western Tradition*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994, pp. 265-66.

⁵ In the preface of his study on contemporary Muslim Apocalypticism, David Cook argues that 'it is not uncommon for researchers to regard the field of Apocalyptic thought as entirely irrational and to dismiss its writers as unstable, or even as lunatics. This approach should be avoided, however, if only because of the number of people being characterized in this manner. When a substantial proportion of population - even if not the majority - shares a particular worldview, value judgement that would dismiss their beliefs as lunatic are unhelpful, to say the least. This not to say, however, that the scholars studying these beliefs, or even those of other, more moderate believers, are going to consider such a worldview entirely balanced'. David Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, op. cit., p. 2.

⁶ See the voice 'paranoid personality disorder' in Andrew M. Colman, *Dictionary of Psychology*, Oxford, OUP, 2009, p. 549.

⁷ Cf. Charles Strozier, 'The Apocalyptic Other, On Fundamentalism and Violence', *Nova Religio*, Volume 11, Issue 1, 2007, pp. 84-96; and Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, New York: Vintage, 1952, p. 4.

⁸ Ibid. pp. 29-31.

⁹ Cf. Charles Strozier, 'The Apocalyptic Other' in Charles Strozier, David Terman, and James Jones (ed.), *The Fundamentalist Mindset, Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History*, Oxford: OUP, 2010, p. 64.

¹⁰ Cf. David Terman, 'Fundamentalism and the Paranoid Gestalt' in Charles Strozier, David Terman, and James Jones (ed.), *The Fundamentalist Mindset*, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

¹¹ Cf. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 31.

¹² Cf. Charles Strozier, 'The Apocalyptic Other, On Fundamentalism and Violence', op. cit. pp. 89-90.

¹³ Cf. Elias Canetti, *Crowd and Power*, op. cit. p. 71.

¹⁴ The well-know case of Judge Schreber, as recounted by both Freud and Canetti, is a clear example of a paranoid fantasy in which a subject threatened by a demonic enemy becomes a divinely appointed instrument to carry out the regeneration of the world. Cf. Sigmund Freud, *The Schreber case*, London: Penguin, 2002; Elias Canetti, *Crowd and Power*, op. cit., pp. 434-62.

¹⁵ Cf. Charles Strozier, 'The Apocalyptic Other, On Fundamentalism and Violence', op. cit., p. 90.

¹⁶ Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁷ On this subject see especially Charles Strozier, *Apocalypse: On Psychology of Fundamentalism in America*, Boston: Beacon, 1994, pp. 27-55; William Meissner, *Thy Kingdom Come, Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Messiah and Millennium*, Kansas City: Sheed-Ward, 1995, pp. 241-65; and Robert Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist, The History of an American Obsession*, op. cit., pp. 197-200.

¹⁸ On this note, Strozier reports that: "when asked to describe that other, a look of horror will come over the face of a paranoid, one that comes from a place of secret awareness. It is really very striking. Sometimes, indeed often, he will tilt his head slightly, jut his chin, perhaps turn somewhat sideways to look askance, and smirk with a knowing smile that can become a terrifying and haughty laugh". Charles Strozier, 'The Apocalyptic Other, On Fundamentalism and Violence', op. cit., p. 88.

¹⁹ Charles Strozier, 'The Apocalyptic Other', op. cit., p. 65.

²⁰ Cf. Vamik D. Volkan, *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies: From Clinical Practice to International Relationships*, New York: Jason, 1988, p. 99.

²¹ Cf. Charles Strozier, 'The Apocalyptic Other', op. cit., p. 64.

²² Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, [1957 edition], op. cit., pp. 309-10. In the following revised editions of the study [1961, 1970, 1980, and 2004], Cohn fully excised the above passage, and significantly downplayed, if not entirely abandoned, the psychoanalytical emphasis in addressing causes, meanings and motivations at the basis of revolutionary Millenarian activities in the Middle Ages. Cohn's controversial hypothesis assuming Apocalyptic speculations and movements as 'paranoid responses' to economic deprivation and political persecution came under huge scholarly criticism in that it applied modern psychoanalytical concepts and theories "to patient long dead, and beyond the reach of clinical study". Cf. Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., note 32, p. 232-33.

²³ Cf. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, op. cit., p. 29.

²⁴ Cf. Robert Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist, The History of an American Obsession*, op. cit., p. 9.

Moshe Hazani observes that Apocalyptic mentality is analogous to the paranoid ideation in that they both view history as 'a conspiracy set in motion by demonic forces and the enemy as the incarnation of cosmic evil'. The two mindsets would be affected by 'paranoid grandiosity': the more one thinks to be involved in an action which takes place on a cosmic sphere, the more one feels 'aggrandized' to that transcendental level. Hazani raises nevertheless relevant differences and communalities between individual paranoid's demons and those crowding the Apocalyptic tests: 'Even though [the individual'] paranoid constructions are clear, logical and systematic, they are private. Apocalyptic devils are [instead] creations of private affect that are projected onto the public sphere and objectivised. In essence, they become 'products of human expressive activity available to both the producer (the paranoid author of the Apocalypse) and other men (the faithful) as elements of a common world. Tremendously magnified, they are elevated to a cosmic level and viewed as active forces in history, omnipotent creatures of mythological proportion. In this respect too the Apocalyptic is analogous to paranoid ideation. Individual paranoid construction has certain affinities with mythical thinking, but only in the Apocalyptic, the mythical outlook condenses into lasting mythological configurations. However, the image of the devil occupies a prominent position in both systems. The stronger this external enemy becomes, and the more he grips our imagination, the more torpid our internal enemy becomes. As the objectifications of evil are socially shared social integration is fostered and paranoid's sense of isolation is reduced'. Cf. Moshe Hazani, 'Apocalypticism, Symbolic breakdown and Paranoia: An Application of Lifton's Model to the Death-Rebirth Fantasy' in Albert I. Baumgarten (ed.), *Apocalyptic Time*, London: Brill, 2000, pp. 15-39.

²⁵ Cf. Charles Strozier, 'Opening the Seven Seals of Fundamentalism' in Charles Strozier, David Terman, and James Jones (ed.), *The Fundamentalist Mindset, Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History*, op. cit., pp. 116-18.

²⁶ On the psychological experience of 'running out of time' and the various Apocalyptic 'strategies' for dealing with such an anxiety see especially two studies by Richard Fenn, *The End of Time, Religion, Ritual, and the Forging of the Soul*, op. cit.; and *Time Exposure, The Personal Experience of Time in Secular Societies*, Oxford, OUP, 2001.

²⁷ Cf. Charles Strozier, 'Opening the Seven Seals of Fundamentalism', op. cit., pp. 111-14.

²⁸ Christopher Rowland, *Radical Christianity, A Reading of Recovery*, New York: Orbis, 1988, p.3.

²⁹ This very assumption is made by the clinical psychologist David Terman in 'Fundamentalism and the Paranoid Gestalt' in Charles Strozier, David Terman, and James Jones (ed.), *The Fundamentalist Mindset, Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History*, op. cit., p. 60.

³⁰ See note 252. Psycho-history, put simply, the application of psychological methods to historical processes, all Lifton's work falls into this category.

³¹ Cf. William Meissner, *Thy Kingdom Come, Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Messiah and Millennium*, op. cit., pp. 348-51.

³² According to Lifton [*End or Rebirth*, op. cit., p. 156], 'the Apocalyptic can provide form, coherence, and shared spiritual experience to the isolated delusional system of the individual schizophrenic-paranoid person'.

³³ Cf. David Terman, 'Fundamentalism and the Paranoid Gestalt', op. cit., p. 61

³⁴ James Jones maintains that the image of 'punitive', 'vengeful' and 'overpowering patriarchal' divinity is at the centre of Revelation, as in any other 'religious text of terror'. Those believers who buy into a literal understanding of such texts 'would be inclined towards a more rigid dichotomizing of the world and less capacity for empathy, traits that appear to characterize many religious motivated terrorists'. Cf. James Jones, 'Eternal Warfare, Violence on the Mind of American Apocalyptic Christianity' in Charles Strozier, David Terman, and James Jones (ed.), *The Fundamentalist Mindset, Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History*, op. cit., pp. 94-95. Strozier defines the graphic imagery of John's Revelation as 'exterminatory' and 'genocidal', the entire composition would be an explicit 'embrace of death' by a very angry and revengeful God: 'The violence of the Book of Revelation is quite astonishing. Hail and fire mixed with blood are cast upon the earth, burning the mountains and turning the sea bloody [8:7-9]; an angel pours wrath on the sun and scorches men with fire [16:8]; strange riders of death prowl the land [6:5, 8]; beasts wreak havoc [13:1-18]; and the mighty whore drinks 'abominations and filthiness for her fornication' from a golden cup [17:4]. Destruction is everywhere, on the earth, in the seas, and in the mountains, and no living thing escapes God's wrath. The violence is exterminatory, or totalistic in nature'. Cf. Charles Strozier, 'Opening the Seven Seals of Fundamentalism', op. cit., pp. 110-11 and p. 114.

³⁵ Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, op. cit., pp. 64-67; and *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, op. cit., pp. 120-30.

³⁶ Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come*, op. cit., pp. 95-99. Anders Hultgard, 'Persian Apocalypticism' in John J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, op. cit., pp. 39-60.

³⁷ For what concerns the theme of *ekpyrosis* in the classic world see especially Hubert Cancik, 'The End of the World, of History, and of the individual in Greek and Roman Antiquity' in John J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, volume I, op. cit., pp. 84-120.

³⁸ Robert Jay Lifton, *Superpower Syndrome, America's Apocalyptic Confrontation with the World*, New York: Thunder's Mouth, 2003, pp. 32-33.

³⁹ Cf. Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More, Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, op. cit., pp. 115-51.

⁴⁰ Robert Jay Lifton, *Superpower Syndrome, America's Apocalyptic Confrontation with the World*, op. cit., p. 26.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 20.

⁴² Robert Jay Lifton, *Superpower Syndrome, America's Apocalyptic Confrontation with the World*, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

⁴³ On the Apocalyptic concept of killing in order to heal the world from its corrupting agents see especially Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, New York: Basic Books, 1986; and *Destroying the World to Save it, Aum Shinrikyo, Apocalyptic Violence, and the New Global Terrorism*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999, pp. 136-63.

⁴⁴ Although a consensus of opinion is far from having been reached on the issue, scholars and experts suggest that Millenarian movements, cults and sects actively engage in Apocalyptically inspired violence as a response to a complex host of facilitating factors and circumstances which might include sense of isolation, paranoid mindset associated with the idea of being persecuted, aspirations for dominion, mismanagement of a disconfirmation crisis (failed prophecy), an assault against the group by law enforcement authorities, or, more generally, the extent to which the group maintain a confrontational stand against the surrounding society. Another decisive variable consists in whether or not the group is organized militarily or para-militarily. On complex relationship between Apocalyptic-Millenarian theology and violence see especially Catherine Wessinger (ed.), *Millennialism, Persecution and Violence, Historical Cases*, op. cit.; Jeffrey Kaplan (ed.), *Millennial Violence, Past Present and Future*, London: Frank Cass: 2002; David Bromley and Gordon Melton (ed.), *Cult, Religion, and Violence*, Cambridge: CUP, 2002; James F. Rinehart, *Apocalyptic Faith and Political Violence, Prophets of Terror*, London: Palgrave, 2006; and Philip Lamy, *Millennium Rage, Survivalist, White Supremacist, and the Doomsday Prophecy*, New York: Plenum Press, 1996.

⁴⁵ Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism, The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, op. cit., p. 101.

⁴⁶ Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, London: Penguin Press, 1969, p. 4.

⁴⁷ In 1979, Lifton minted the term 'nuclearism' to define mankind's deification and worship of the very agents of its potential destruction. The passionate embrace of weapons of mass destruction would be "a way of restoring a lost sense of immortality. Nuclearism is a secular religion, a total ideology in which grace and even salvation – the mastery of death and evil – are achieved through the power of a new technological deity. The deity is seen as capable not only of Apocalyptic destruction but also of unlimited creation. And the nuclear believer or 'nuclearist' allies himself with that power and feels compelled to expound on the virtues of his deity. He may come to depend on the weapons to keep the world going". Cf. Robert Jay Lifton, *The Broken Connection*, New York: Simon Schuster, 1979, pp. 369-87.

⁴⁸ On the theme of the 'purely annihilative' Apocalypse, that is, the catastrophic end to human history controlled by no God at all, with neither dénouement nor rebirth, but followed by utter oblivion see especially the study of Douglas Robinson, 'Literature and Apocalyptic' in Stephen J. Stern, *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and Contemporary Age*, Volume III, London: Continuum, 2000, pp. 360-87.

⁴⁹ Elias Canetti, *Crowd and Power*, op. cit., p. 187.

⁵⁰ Tzvetan Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, op. cit., p. 178.

⁵¹ Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988, p. 200.

⁵² This represents the main argument of Richard Fenn's study *Dreams of Glory, The Sources of Apocalyptic Terror*, op. cit., especially Chapter I, III, IV and VI.

⁵³ Sigmund Freud's notion of 'the narcissism of minor differences' states that "it is precisely the minor differences between people who are otherwise alike that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them". Cf. Anton Blok, 'The Narcissism of Minor Differences', *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1998, pp. 33-56.

⁵⁴ With regards to the shared Apocalyptic ground distinguishing the faiths part of the 'Abrahamitic triangle', Abbas Amanat that: 'whether historical or exegetical in approach, the comparative scholarship of Apocalypticism as a phenomenon confirms the presence of common themes in all religious traditions that originated in the Middle East. Despite the peculiarities of each tradition, all of them demonstrate the interplay between archetypal motifs and indigenous cultures both in medieval and in modern times. It is primarily this shared apocalyptic legacy of salvation in Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam that helped shaped not only the theological perspective and Eschatology of these religious communities, but also served as a

driving force behind major currents in human history from the rise of new institutional religions to political revolutions, and intellectual movements'. Abbas Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism*, London: Tauris, 2009, p. 20. On the same argument see also the seminal studies of David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, op. cit., pp. 92-136.

⁵⁵ For an account of the Messianic doctrine of the Mahdi see especially David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, op. cit., Chapter III and IV; Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984; Jean Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*, op. cit.; and Timothy R. Furnish, *Holiest Wars: Islamic Mahdis, Their Jihads, and Osama Bin Laden*, London: Praeger, 2005.

⁵⁶ Cf. David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, pp. 142-43, pp. 159-60 and pp. 203-9.

⁵⁷ Cf. Richard Fenn, *Dreams of Glory, Sources of Apocalyptic Terror*, op. cit., p. 66 and pp. 92-103.

On the same theme, John G. Gager [The Origins of Anti-Semitism, op. cit., p. 21] maintains 'hatred between groups who have no stake in a common stock of religiously sanctioned identity symbols can be scarcely be as virulent as hatred between groups whose relations express a religious form of sibling rivalry. (...) The closer the relationship, the more intense the conflict'.

⁵⁸ Cf. Emile Cioran, *History and Utopia*, op. cit., p. 92.

⁵⁹ As previously noted, that Modernity begets ambivalence and, as a consequences, the need for ordering solutions, which, in turn, generate more ambivalence remains a cardinal assumption of Zygmunt Bauman's sociology. Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, op. cit.; *Modernity and the Holocaust*, op. cit., and *Liquid Modernity*, London: Polity Press, 2000.

⁶⁰ Cf. Richard Fenn, *Dreams of Glory, Sources of Apocalyptic Terror*, op. cit., p. 8; pp. 23-24; and pp. 80-81; Fenn already developed the link between the purgatory complex and the unsettling feeling of 'running out time' that engulfs modern society in two previous studies, *The End of Time, Religion, Ritual, and the Forging of the Soul*, op. cit., *The Persistence of Purgatory*, Cambridge: CUP, 1995.

⁶¹ On the Essenes and their Messianic expectations see especially John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, op. cit.; and Martin G. Abegg, Edward M. Cook, and Michael Owen Wise (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, San Francisco: Harper, 1996.

⁶² Cf. Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come*, op. cit., pp. 198-93.

⁶³ Cf. Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, op. cit., p. 136-37.

⁶⁴ Cf. John Walliss, 'Millenarianism and Violence in the Contemporary World' in Kenneth Newport and Crawford Gribben (ed.), *Expecting the End, Millennialism in Social and Historical Context*, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006, pp. 31-33.

⁶⁵ See especially Charles B. Strozier, David M. Terman, and James W. Jones (ed.), *The Fundamentalist Mindset*, op. cit., pp. 42-43; pp. 219-20; pp. 222-23.

⁶⁶ Cf. Bernard McGinn, 'Revelation', Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, op. cit., p. 523.

⁶⁷ Cf. Christopher Rowland and Judith Kovacs, *Revelation, The Blackwell Bible Commentaries*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004, p. 248.

⁶⁸ Cf. Bernard McGinn, 'Revelation', op. cit., p. 524.

⁶⁹ Richard Fenn, *Dreams of Glory, Sources of Apocalyptic Terror*, op. cit., p. 2 and p. 5.

⁷⁰ Adela Yarbo Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis, The Power of the Apocalypse*, op. cit., p. 171. McGinn insists that, notwithstanding its holy war symbolism, the Book of Revelation's spiritual message must be seen as a call to non-violent resistance and martyrdom in 'the midst of a time of trial'. Rather than as the outcome of human revolt against the oppressors, vindication is expected 'imminently' by the hand of God: 'John wrote in a time of persecution to give courage to his fellow Christians, and he wrote from a deeply anti-Roman point of view similar to that of the Jewish Zealots but not shared by all in the early church. Like the Book of Daniel, the Apocalypse makes use of the imagery of holy war, but not to encourage open rebellion, as did the Zealots, but rather to advocate passive resistance and a martyr's death, which hastens the end, because a fixed number of martyrs must die before the eschatological battle can be initiated'. Cf. Bernard McGinn, 'Early Apocalypticism: An Ongoing Debate', op. cit., p. 23.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁷² Cf. Stephen O'Leary, 'Law Enforcement and New Religious Movements', *Nova Religio*, October 1999, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 54-59.

⁷³ Cf. René Girard, *Battling to the End, Conversations with Benoît Chantre*, East Lansing: MUP, 2009. On the same argument see also Robert Hamerton-Kelly (ed.), *Politics and Apocalypse, Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*, East Lansing: MUP, 2007.

⁷⁴ John R. Hall, *Apocalypse, From Antiquity to the Empire of Modernity*, op. cit., p. 222.

Bibliography

Printed sources

- Abegg, Martin G., Cook, Edward M., and Wise, Michael Owen (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, San Francisco: Harper, 1996.
- Aberle, David F., 'A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory as applied to Millenarian and other Cult Movements' in Sylvia L. Thrupp (ed.), *Millennial Dreams in Action*, New York: Shocken Books, 1966.
- Abrams, M. H., 'Apocalypse: Themes and Variations' in C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich, (ed.), *The Apocalypse, In English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, Manchester: MUP, 1984.
- Akenson, Donald Harman, *God's Peoples, Covenant and Land in South Africa, Israel, and Ulster*, London: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Allan Poe, Edgar, *A Descent into the Maelstrom in The Complete Stories*, London: Everyman's Library, 1992.
- Allison, Dale C., *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.
- Almog, Shmuel, Reinhartz, Jehuda and Shapira, Anita (ed.), *Zionism and Religion*, Hanover: BUP, 1998.
- Almond, Gabriel A., Appleby, Scott R., Sivan, Emmanuel, *Strong Religion, The Rise of Fundamentalism around the World*, Chicago: CUP, 2003.
- Altany, Alan, 'Biblical Criticism' in Brenda E. Brasher (edit by), *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism*, London: Routledge, 2001.
- Amanat, Abbas, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism*, London: Tauris, 2009.
- Appleby, R. Scott (ed.), *The Spokesmen for the Despised, Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East*, Chicago: CUP, 1997.
- Appleby, R. Scott, 'Globalization, Religious Change and the Common Good', *Journal of Religion, Conflict, and Peace*, Volume 3, Issue 1, Fall 2009.
- Appleby, R. Scott, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred, Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*, New York: Carnegie, 2000.
- Aran, Gideon, 'From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion' in Calvin Goldscheider and Jacob Neusner (ed.), *Social Foundation of Judaism*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990.
- Aran, Gideon, 'From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion' in Calvin Goldscheider and Jacob Neusner, *Social Foundations of Judaism*, New York: Prentice-Hall, 1990.
- Aran, Gideon, 'Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)' in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Fundamentalism Project Volume I, Chicago: CUP, 1991.
- Aran, Gideon, 'The Father, the Son, and the Holy Land, The Spiritual Authorities of Jewish Fundamentalism' in Israel in R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Spokesmen for the Despised, Fundamentalist Leaders in the Middle East*, Chicago: CUP, 1997.
- Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York: Harvest, 1968,
- Arendt, Hannah, *On Violence*, London: Penguin Press, 1969.
- Ariel, Yaakov, 'How Are Jews and Israel Portrayed in the Left Behind Series? A Historical Discussion of Jewish-Christian Relations' in Bruce David Forbes (ed.), *Rapture, Revelation, and The End Times, Exploring the Left Behind Series*, London: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2004.
- Ariel, Yaakov, *Evangelizing the Chosen People, Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000*, Chapel Hill: UNCP, 2000.
- Ariel, Yaakov, *On Behalf of Israel, American Fundamentalist attitudes towards Jews, Judaism, and Zionism, 1865-1945*, Chicago: CUP, 1991.
- Ariès, Philippe, *Western Attitudes towards Death from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Baltimore: JHUP, 1974.
- Arjomand, Said Amir 'Messianism, Millennialism and Revolution in Early Islamic History' in Magnus Thorkell Bernhardsson and Abbas Amanat (ed.), *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, London: Tauris, 2002.
- Arjomand, Said Amir, 'Religion and the Diversity of Normative Orders' in Said Amir Arjomand (ed.), *The Political Dimensions of Religion*, New York: SUNY, 1993.
- Arjomand, Said Amir, *After Khomeini, Iran Under His Successors*, Oxford: OUP, 2009.

Arjomand, Said Amir, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984;

Armstrong, Karen, 'Seeing Things as They Really Are' in James Langford and Leroy S. Rouner (ed.), *Walking with God in a Fragile World*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.

Aronoff, Myron, *Religion and Politics (Political Anthropology vol. III)*, New York: Transaction Books, 1984.

Aronoff, Myron, *Israeli Visions and Divisions, Cultural Change and Political Conflict*, New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1989.

Asad, Talal, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, Baltimore: JHUP, 1993.

Aurebach, Erich, *Mimesis, The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Princeton: PUP, 1953.

Aviad, Janet, 'The Contemporary Israeli Pursuit of the Millennium', *Religion, Academic Press*, Volume 14, 1984.

Avineri, Shlomo, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State*, New York: Basics Books, 1981.

Bacevich, Andrew J., *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism*, New York: Holt, 2009.

Bademan, R. Bryan, 'Tribulation', in Brenda E. Basher, *Encyclopedia of Fundamentalism*, London: Routledge, 2001.

Barber, Benjamin, *Jihad vs McWorld, Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy*, London: Corgi Books, 2001.

Barkun, Michael, *A Culture of Conspiracy, Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, Los Angeles: UCP, 2003.

Barkun, Michael, *Disaster and the Millennium*, New Haven: YUP, 1974.

Barr, James, *Fundamentalism*, London: SCM Press, 1991.

Bauckham, Richard, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation*, Edinburg: Clark, 1993.

Bauckman, Richard, 'Revelation', in John Barton and John Muddiman (ed.), *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Baudrillard, Jean, 'Hysteresis of the Millennium' in Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn (ed.), *The Year 2000, Essays on the End*, New York: NYUP, 1997.

Bauman, Zygmunt, *Liquid Fear*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007,

Bauman, Zygmunt, *Liquid Modernity*, London: Polity Press, 2000.

Bauman, Zygmunt, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

Bauman, Zygmunt, *Mortality and Immortality and Other Life Strategies*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.

Becker, Ernest, *The Denial of Death*, New York: Simon Shuster, 1973.

Becker, Ernst, *Birth and Death of Meaning: An Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Problem of Man*, New York: Free Press, 1971.

Beit-Hallahmi, Benjamin, *Despair and Deliverance: Private Salvation in Contemporary Israel*, SUNY, 1992.

Benjamin, Walter, 'The Path to Success, in Thirteen Theses' in Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (ed.), *Selected Writings of Walter Benjamin, 1927-1930, Volume II, part 1*, Harvard: Belknap, 1999.

Benjamin, Walter, 'The Political-Theological Fragment' in Howard Eiland, and Michael W. Jennings (ed.), *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, Volume III, 1935-38*, Harvard: Belknap, 2002.

Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken, 1968.

Berger, Peter and Luckmann, Thomas, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Penguin, 1967.

Berger, Peter, *The De-secularization of the World, Resurgent Religions and World Politics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdman, 1999.

Berger, Peter, *The Sacred Canopy, Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York: Anchor Books, 1969.

Berlin, Isaiah, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity, Chapters in the History of Ideas*, London: Fontana, 1991.

Berstein, Richard J., *The Abuse of Evil, The Corruption of Politics and Religion since 9/11*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005.

Biale, David, 'The Threat of Messianism: An Interview with Gershom Scholem', *The New York Review of Books*, August 14, 1980.

Biale, David, 'Zionism' in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religions*, London: MacMillan, 2005.

Biale, David, 'Gershom Scholem on Jewish Messianism' in Marc Saperstein (ed.), *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*, New York: NYUP, 1992.

Biale, David, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History*, New York: Schocken Books, 1986.

Bivins, Jason C., *Religion of Fear, The Politics of Horror in Conservative Evangelicalism*, Oxford: OUP, 2008.

Bloch, Ernst, *The Principle of Hope*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986.

Bloch, Ernst, *The Spirit of Utopia*, Stanford: SUP, 2000.

Blok, Anton, 'The Narcissism of Minor Differences', *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1998.

Blumenberg, Hans, *Work on Myth*, Cambridge: MITP, 1985.

Boda, Mark J., 'Figuring the Future: the Prophet and Messiah in Writings' in Stanley Porter (ed.), *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

Boettner, Loraine, 'Postmillennialism' in Robert G. Clouse (ed.), *The Meaning of the Millennium, Four Views*, Downer Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1977.

Bowker, John (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, Oxford: OUP, 1997.

Boyce, Mary, 'Persian Religion in the Achaemenid Age' in Davies, W. D. and Finkelstein Louis (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol. I, The Persian Period*, Cambridge: CUP, 1984.

Boyce, Mary, *Zoroastrians, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London: Routledge, 2001.

Boyer, Paul 'The Middle East in Modern American Prophetic Belief' in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imagining the End, Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, London: Tauris, 2002.

Boyer, Paul, *When Time Shall Be No More, Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*, Harvard: HUP, 2000.

Boyer, Paul, 'The Middle East in Modern American Popular Prophetic Belief', in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imagining the End, Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, London: Tauris, 2002.

Broch, Hermann, *The Sleepwalkers*, New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964.

Brog, David, *Standing with Israel: Why Christians Support the Jewish State*, Lake Mary: FrontLine, 2006.

Bromley, David and Melton, Gordon (ed.), *Cult, Religion, and Violence*, Cambridge: CUP, 2002.

Bromley, David G., 'Constructing Apocalypticism, Social and Cultural Elements of Social Organization' in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (ed.), *Millennium, Messiah, and Mayhem, Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, London: Routledge, 1997.

Brummett, Barry, *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric*, New York: Praeger, 1991.

Burridge, Kenelm, *Mambu: Melanesian Millennium*, Princeton: PUP, 1995.

Burridge, Kenelm, *New Heaven and New Earth, A Study of Millenarian Activities*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.

Buruma, Ian and Margalit, Avishai, *Occidentalism, A Short History of Anti-Westernism*, London: Atlantic Books, 2004.

Butler, Jonathan M., 'Adventism in the American Experience' in Edwin Scott Gaustad (ed.), *The Rise of Adventism: A Commentary on the Social and Religious Ferment of Mid-Nineteenth America*, New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

Caillois, Roger *Man and the Sacred*, Chicago: CUP, 2001.

Camus, Albert, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, London: Penguin, 1963.

Camus, Albert, *The Rebel, An Essay on Man in Revolt*, New York: Vintage, 1992.

Canetti, Elias, *The Conscience of Words and Earwitness*, London: Picador, 1979.

Canetti, Elias, *Crowds and Power*, New York: Farrar, 1973.

Carpenter, Joel A., *Revive US Again, The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*, Oxford: OUP, 1997.

- Carroll, James, *Constantine Sword, The Church and the Jews*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
- Cassirer, Ernst, *An Essay on Man, An Introduction to a Philosophy to Human Culture*, New Haven: YUP, 1944.
- Cassirer, Ernst, *Symbol, Myth, and Culture: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer, 1935-1945*, New Haven: YUP, 1981.
- Cassirer, Ernst, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume Three: The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, New Haven: YUP, 1965.
- Cavalli, Luciano, 'Charisma and Twentieth Century Politics', in Scott Lash and Sam Whimster (ed.), *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1987.
- Chapman, Colin, *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine*, Oxford: Lion, 2002.
- Charlesworth, James (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity: the First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987.
- Cioran, Emile, *History and Utopia*, London: Quartet, 1987.
- Cipolla, Benedicta, 'Reinhold Niebuhr is Unseen Force in 2008 Elections', *Religion News Service of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life*, September 27, 2007.
- Clark, Victoria, *Allies for Armageddon: The Rise of Christian Zionism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Cohen, Arthur, *The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition*, New York: Harper and Row, 1963.
- Cohen, Asher and Susser, Bernard, *Israel and the Politics of Jewish Identity: The Secular-Religious Impasse*, Washington: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.
- Cohn-Sherbok, Dan, *The Politics of the Apocalypse, The History and Influence of Christian Zionism*, Oxford: OUP, 2006.
- Cohn, Norman, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come, The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith*, Yale: YUP, 1999.
- Cohn, Norman, 'How Time Acquired a Consummation' in Malcolm Bull (ed.), *Apocalypse Theory and the Ends of the World*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.
- Cohn, Norman, *The Pursuit of Millennium, Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, London: Pimlico, 2004.
- Cohn, Norman, *Warrant for Genocide, The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, London: Serif, 2005;
- Collins, Adela Yarbo, *Crisis and Catharsis, The Power of the Apocalypse*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.
- Collins, John J. (ed.), *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre, Semeia 14*, Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979.
- Collins, John J. (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Volume I, The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, London: Continuum, 1999.
- Collins, John J., 'Eschatological Dynamics and Utopian Ideals in Early Judaism' in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imagining the End, Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, London: Tauris, 2002.
- Collins, John J., *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, London: Routledge, 1997.
- Collins, John J., *The Apocalyptic Imagination, An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Collins, John J., *The Scepter and the Star: the Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, New York: Doubleday, 1995.
- Colman, Andrew M., *Dictionary of Psychology*, Oxford, OUP, 2009.
- Conzelmann, Hans, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, New York: Harper and Row, 1969.
- Cook, David, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature*, Syracuse: SUP, 2005.
- Cook, David, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*, Princeton: Darwin, 2002.
- Cook, Rabbi Michael J., *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament*, Woodstock: JL, 2008.
- Costas, Orlando E., *The Church and its Mission*, Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1974.
- Court, John M., *Approaching the Apocalypse, A Short History of Christian Millenarianism*, London: Tauris, 2008.
- Craibs, Ian, *Classic Social Theory*, Oxford: OUP, 1997.
- Crombie, Kelvin, *For the Love of Zion: Christian Witness and the Restoration of Israel*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1991.

Cromer, Gerald, 'Withdrawal and Conquest: Two Aspects of the Haredi Response to Modernity' in Laurence J. Silberstein (ed.), *Jewish Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective, Religion, Ideology, and the Crisis of Modernity*, New York: NYUP, 1993.

Csordas, Thomas, *Language, Charisma and Creativity: The Ritual Life of a Religious Movement*, Berkeley: UCP, 1997.

Dahl, Robert A., *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, New Haven, YUP, 1983.

Daniel, E. Randolph, 'Joachim of Flora: Patterns of History in the Apocalypse' in Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn, *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.

Daniels, Ted, 'Charters of Righteousness: Politics, Prophets and the Drama of Conversion' in Stephen O'Leary and Glen McGhee (ed.), *War in Heaven, Heaven on Earth, Theories of the Apocalyptic, Millennialism and Society*, London: Equinox, 2005.

Davidson, James West, *The Logic of Millennial Thought*, New Haven, YUP, 1977.

Davies, W. D., *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*, Berkeley: UCP, 1982.

De Felice, Renzo, *Interpretations of Fascism*, Harvard: HUP, 1977.

De Martino, Ernesto, *The End of The World, A Contribution to the Analysis of Cultural Apocalypses*, Milano: Einaudi, 2002.

De Santillana, Giorgio and Von Dechend, Hertha, *Hamlet's Mill, An Essay investigating the Origins of Human Knowledge and its Transmission through Myth*, Boston: Gambit, 1969.

De Vaux, Ronald, *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions*, London: Longman, 1951.

Delbanco, Andrew, *The Death of Satan, How Americans Have Lost Their Sense of Evil*, New York: Farrar, 1996.

Diprose, Ronald E., *Israel and the Church, The Origins and Effects of Replacement Theology*, London: Paternoster, 2004.

Dittmer, Jason, 'The Geographical Pivot of (the End of) History: Evangelical Geopolitical Imagination and Audience Interpretation of Left Behind', *Political Geography*, n. 27, 2008.

Don-Yehiya, Eliezer, 'The Book and the Sword: The Nationalist Yeshivot and Political Radicalism in Israel', in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Accounting for Fundamentalism, The Dynamic Character of Movements*, Chicago: CUP, 1994.

Don-Yehiya, Eliezer, 'The Negation of Galut in Religious Zionism', *Modern Judaism*, 12 (2), 1992.

Donald, Kevin Mac, 'Thinking about Neo-conservatism' in Aftab Ahmad Malik, *With God on Our Side, Politics and Theology of the War on Terrorism*, Bristol: Amal, 2005.

Dorrien, Gary, 'Evangelical Ironies, Theology, Politics and Israel'; and Gerald R. McDermott, 'Evangelical and Israel' both in Alan Mittleman, Byron Johnson, and Nancy Isserman (ed.), *Uneasy Allies? Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, New York: Lexington Books, 2007.

Dorrien, Gary, 'Evangelical Ironies, Theology, Politics, and Israel' in Alan Mittleman, Byron Johnson, and Nancy Isserman (ed.), *Uneasy Allies? Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, New York: Lexington Books, 2007.

Douglas, Mary, *Purity and Danger, An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, London: Routledge, 2006.

Durkheim, Emile, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Oxford: OUP, 2005.

Durkheim, Emile, *Suicide*, London: Free Press, 1951.

Edinger, Edward F., *Archetype of the Apocalypse, A Jungian Study of the Book of Revelation*, New York: Open Court, 1999.

Eliade, Mircea, *Myth and Reality*, San Francisco: Harper and Collins, 1963.

Eliade, Mircea, *Patterns in Comparative Religions*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1959.

Eliade, Mircea, *The Myth of the Eternal Return, Cosmos and History*, Princeton: PUP, 2005.

Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and Profane, The Nature of Religions*, Orlando: Harcourt, 1959.

Elias, Norbert, *Involvement and Detachment*, London: Basil Blackwell, 1987.

Ertzberg, Arthur, *The Zionist Idea, A Historical Analysis and Reader*, Philadelphia, JPS, 1997.

Euben, Roxanne L., *Enemy in the Mirror, Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism*, Princeton: PUP, 1999.

Evron, Boas, *Jewish State or Israeli Nation?*, Bloomington: IUP, 1995.

Fackre, Gabriel, 'Biblical Inerrancy' in Brenda E. Brasher (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Fundamentalism*, London: Routledge, 2001.

Feldman, Louis H., *Remember Amalek! Vengeance, Zealotry, and Group Destruction in the Bible According to Philo, Pseudo-Philo, and Josephus*, Detroit: Huc Press: 2004.

Fenn, Richard, *Dreams of Glory, The Sources of Apocalyptic Terror*, London: Ashgate, 2005.

Fenn, Richard, *The End of Time, Religion, Ritual, and the Forging of the Soul*, London: SPCK, 1997.

Fenn, Richard, *The Persistence of Purgatory*, Cambridge: CUP, 1995.

Fenn, Richard, *Time Exposure, The Personal Experience of Time in Secular Societies*, Oxford, OUP, 2001.

Ferrero, Guglielmo, *Power: the Invisible Genes of the City*, Milan: SugarCo, 1981.

Fiege, Michael, *Settling in the Hearts, Jewish Fundamentalism in the Occupied Territories*, Detroit: WSUP, 2009.

Filc, Dani, *The Political Right in Israel, Different Faces of Jewish Populism*, London: Routledge, 2009.

Filiu, Jean-Pierre, *Apocalypse in Islam*, Berkeley: UCP, 2010.

Firestone, Reuven, 'Holy War in Modern Judaism? Mitzvah War and the Problem of the Three Vows', *Journal of American Academy of Religions*, Vol. 74, No. 4., December 2006.

Fisher, Nick, *Hybris: A Study in the Values of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greece*, Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1992.

Flanagan, Thomas, 'The Politics of the Millennium', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 17, n. 3, 2005.

Flükiger, Jean-Marc, 'Jewish Messianism and the Settler Movement after Gaza Withdrawal - Interview with Gideon Aran', *Religioscope*, 26 November 2005.

Forbes, Bruce David and Kilde, Jeanne Halgren (ed.), *Rapture, Revelation, and the End Times: Exploring the Left Behind Series*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004.

Forrester, Duncan B., *Apocalypse Now? Reflections on Faith in a Time of Terror*, London: Ashgate, 2005.

Forsyth, Neil, *The Old Enemy, Satan and the Combat Myth*, Princeton: PUP, 1987.

Fortunati, Vita, 'From Utopia to Science Fiction' in Krisham Kumar and Stephen Bann (edit.), *Utopias and the Millennium*, London: Reaktion Book, 1993.

Foxman, Abraham H., *The Deadliest Lies: The Israel Lobby and the Myth of Jewish Control*, London: Palgrave, 2007.

Franklin, Robert, 'Piety in the Public Square' in Martha J. Simmons and Frank A. Thomas (ed.), *9.11.01: African American Leaders Respond to an American Tragedy*, Valley Forge: Judson, 2001.

Freud, Sigmund, *The Schreber Case*, London: Penguin, 2002;

Friedlander, Saul, Holton, Gerald, Marx, Leo and Skolnikoff, Eugene (ed.), *Visions of Apocalypse, End or Rebirth?*, London: Holmes, 1985.

Friedman, Menachem, 'Jewish Zealots: Conservative versus Innovative', in Emmanuel Sivan and Menachem Friedman (ed.), *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East*, New York: Sunny Press, 1990.

Friedman, Menachem, 'Religious Zealotry in Israeli Society' in S. Pool and E. Klausz (ed.), *On Ethnic and Religious Diversity in Israel*, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1975.

Friedman, Robert I., *The False Prophet, Rabbi Meir Kahane – From FBI informant to Knesset Member*, London: Faber, 1990.

Frykholm, Amy Johnson, *Rapture Culture, Left Behind in Evangelical America*, Oxford: OUP, 2004.

Fuller, Robert, *Naming the Antichrist, The History of an American Obsession*, Oxford: OUP, 1995.

Furnish, Timothy R., *Holiest Wars: Islamic Mahdis, Their Jihads, and Osama Bin Laden*, London: Praeger, 2005.

Gager, John G., *Kingdom and Community, The Social World of Early Christianity*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1975.

Gager, John G., *The Origins of Anti-Semitism, Attitudes Towards Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, Oxford: OUP, 1985.

Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, London: Fontana Press, 1993.

Gehlen, Arnold, *Man: His Nature and Place in the World*, New York: CUP, 1988.

Gentile, Emilio, 'Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definition and Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation' in Roger Griffin (ed.), *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, London: Routledge, 2005.

Gentile, Emilio, 'The Myth of National Regeneration in Italy: From Modernist Avant-Garde to Fascism' in Matthew Affron and Mark Antliff (ed.), *Fascist Visions, Art and Ideology in France and Italy*, Princeton: PUP, 1997.

Gentile, Emilio, *Against Caesar, Christianity and Totalitarianism in the Epoch of Fascisms*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 2010.

Gentile, Emilio, *Apocalypse of Modernity, The Great War for the New Man*, Milano: Mondadori, 2008.

Gentile, Emilio, *History of the Fascist Party, 1919-21, Movement and Militia*, Bari: Laterza, 1989.

Gentile, Emilio, *La Grande Italia, The Myth of the Nation in the 20th Century*, Madison: WUP, 2009.

Gentile, Emilio, *Politics as Religion*, Princeton: PUP, 2006.

Gentile, Emilio, *The Origins of Fascist Ideology 1918-1925*, New York: Enigma, 2005.

Gentile, Emilio, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, Harvard: HUP, 1996.

Gentile, Emilio, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism*, Westport: Praeger, 2003.

Gerth, H. H. and Mills, C. Wright (ed.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, London: Routledge, 1993.

Giddens, Anthony, *The Consequences of Modernity*, London: Polity, 1990.

Girard, René, *Battling to the End, Conversations with Benoît Chantre*, East Lansing: MUP, 2009.

Gnoli, Gherardo, 'Manichaeism: An Overview' in Eliade, Mircea (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, London: Macmillan, 1993.

Goldman, Shalom, *Zeal for Zion, Christian, Jews, and the Idea of the Promised Land*, Chapel Hill: UNCP, 2009.

Gopin, Marc, *Between Eden and Armageddon, The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking*, Oxford: OUP, 2000.

Gordon, Martin L., 'Messianism: Two divergent messianic conceptions in After 40 Years of Statehood', *The World Zionist Organization and Mesilot: The World Movement of Mizrahi-Hapoel Hamizrahi*, Jerusalem, 1989.

Gorenberg, Gershom, *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977*, New York: Times Books, 2006.

Gorenberg, Gershom, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*, New York: Free Press, 2000.

Gray, John, *Black Mass, Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia*, London: Penguin, 2007.

Gray, John, *Heresies, Against Progress and Other Illusions*, London: Granta, 2004.

Gray, John, *The Immortalization Commission: Science and the Strange Quest to Cheat Death*, London: Allen Lane, 2011.

Graziano, Frank, *Millennial New World*, Oxford: OUP, 1999.

Green, John 'Evangelical Protestants and Jews: A view from the Polls' in Alan Mittleman, Byron Johnson, and Nancy Isserman (ed.), *Uneasy Allies? Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, New York: Lexington Books, 2007.

Green, John C., *The Faith Factor: How Religion Influences American Elections*, Dulles: Potomac, 2010.

Greenberg, Jeff, Pyszczynski, Tom and Solomon, Sheldon, 'The Causes and Consequences of a Need for Self-Esteem: A Terror Management Theory' in Roy Baumeister (ed.), *Public Self and Private Self*, New York: Springer-Verlag, 1986.

Greenberg, Jeff, Pyszczynski, Tom and Solomon, Sheldon, *In the Wake of 9/11, The Psychology of Terror*, Washington: American Psychological Association, 2003.

Grenz, Stanley, *Theology for the Community of God*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Grenz, Stanley, *The Millennial Maze, Sorting Out the Evangelical Options*, Downers Groves: IVP, 1992.

Griffin, Roger 'Palingenetic Political Community: Rethinking the Legitimation of Totalitarian Regimes in Interwar Europe', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 3/3, 2002.

Griffin, Roger, *A Fascist Century*, London: Palgrave, 2008.

Griffin, Roger, *Modernism and Fascism, The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, London: Palgrave, 2007.

Griffin, Roger, *The Nature of Fascism*, London: Routledge, 1993.

Gunkel, Hermann, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Habeck, Mary R., *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror*, New Haven: YUP, 2006.

Hagee, John, *Jerusalem Countdown: A Warning to the World*, Lake Mary: Front Line, 2006.

Hagee, John, *The Beginning of the End, The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the Coming of the Antichrist*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996.

Halbertal, Moshe, *Idolatry*, Harvard: HUP, 1992.

Halsell, Grace, *Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War*, Westport: Hill, 1986.

Hamerton-Kelly, Robert (ed.), *Politics and Apocalypse, Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*, East Lansing: MUP, 2007.

Hanson, Paul, *The Dawn of the Apocalyptic*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.

Harold, Fisch, *The Zionist Revolution, A New Perspective*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978.

Hartman, David, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition, An Ancient People Debating its Future*, Yale: YUP, 1984.

Hassner, Ron E., *War on Sacred Grounds*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010.

Haynes, Stephen R., *Reluctant Witnesses, Jews and the Christian Imagination*, Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995.

Hazani, Moshe, 'Apocalypticism, Symbolic breakdown and Paranoia: An Application of Lifton's Model to the Death-Rebirth Fantasy' in Albert I. Baumgarten (ed.), *Apocalyptic Time*, London: Brill, 2000.

Hedva Ben, Israel, 'Talmon on Nationalism', *History of European Ideas*, n. 34, 2008.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction, Reason in History*, New York: NYUP, 1975.

Heilman, Samuel, 'Guides of the Faithful, Contemporary Religious Zionist Rabbis' in A. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Spokesmen for the Despised*, Chicago: CUP, 1997.

Heilman, Samuel, *Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry*, New York: Schocken Books, 1992.

Hellinger, Moshe, 'Political Theology in the Thought of 'Merkaz HaRav' Yeshiva and its Profound Influence on Israeli Politics and Society since 1967', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 9, No. 4, December 2008.

Helyer, Larry, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Hill, Craig, *In God's Time: The Bible and the Future*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

Hobbes, Thomas, *Man and Citizen: De Homine and De Cive*, London: Hackett, 1991.

Hobsbawn, Eric J., *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, London: Abacus, 1995.

Hoelzl, Michael and Ward, Graham (ed.), *Religion and Political Thought: Key Readings - Past and Present*, London: Continuum, 2006.

Hofstadter, Richard, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*, New York: Vintage, 1952.

Horgan, John, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, London: Routledge, 2005.

Horsley, Richard A., 'The Kingdom of God and the Renewal of Israel: Synoptic Gospels, Jesus Movement and Apocalypticism' in John J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Apocalypticism, The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, London: Continuum, 1999.

Hunt, Stephen (ed.), *Christian Millenarianism, From the Early Church to Waco*, Bloomington: IUP, 2001.

Idel, Moshe, *Messianic Mystics*, Yale: YUP, 1998.

Imbari, Motti, 'Fundamentalism in Crisis, The Response of the Gush Emunim Rabbinical Authorities to the Theological Dilemmas Raised by Israel's Disengagement Plan', *Journal of Church and State*, n. 4, 2007.

Imbari, Motti, *Jewish Fundamentalism and the Temple Mount, Who will Build the Third Temple*, New York: Suny Press, 2009.

Isaac, Jules, *Jesus and Israel*, New York: Holt, 1971.

J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Beyond Tradition and Modernity, Changing Religions in a Changing World*, London: Athlone, 1976.

James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, London: Penguin, 1982.

Jarick, John, 'Questioning Sheol' in Porter, Stanley E.; Hayes, Michael A.; and Tombs, David (ed.), *Resurrection*, London: Continuum, 1999.

Jarvie, I. C., *The Revolution in Anthropology*, Chicago: Regnery, 1967.

Jeffrey Kaplan (ed.), *Millennial Violence, Past Present and Future*, London: Frank Cass: 2002.

Jenks, Gregory C., *Origins and Early Developments of the Antichrist Myth*, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991.

Jewett, Robert and Lawrence, John Shelton, *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil, The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmads, 2003.

Jones, James, 'Eternal Warfare, Violence on the Mind of American Apocalyptic Christianity' in Charles Strozier, David Terman, and James Jones (ed.), *The Fundamentalist Mindset, Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History*, Oxford: OUP, 2010.

Juergensmayer, Marc, *The New Cold War, Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, Berkeley: UCP, 1993.

Juergensmeyer, Mark, *Terror in the Mind of God, The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkely: UCP, 2003.

Jung, Carl Gustav, *Psychology and Religions*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975.

Jung, Carl Gustav (ed.), *Man and His Symbols*, London: Aldus Books, 1964.

Jung, Carl Gustav, *Essays on Contemporary Events*, London: Routledge, 1958.

Kaplan, Esther, *With God on Their Side, George W. Bush and the Christian Right*, New York: New Press, 2004.

Kaplan, Lawrence J. and Shatz, David, *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality*, New York: NYUP, 1995.

Katz, Steven T. (ed.), *The Essential Agus, The Writing of Jacob B. Agus*, New York: NYUP, 1997.

Kepel, Gilles, *The Revenge of God, The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, University Park: PSUP, 1994.

Kermode, Frank, 'Apocalypse and the Modern' in Saul Friedlander, Gerard Holton, Leo Marx and Eugene Skolnikoff, *Visions of Apocalypse, End or Rebirth?*, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985.

Kermode, Frank, *The Sense of an Ending, Studies in the Theory of Fiction with a New Epilogue*, Oxford: OUP, 2000.

Klein, Naomi, *The Shock Doctrine*, London: Penguin, 2008.

Koch, Klaus, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, London: SCM Press, 1972.

Kochan, Lionel, 'The Messianic Society: A Jewish Utopia' in Arthur A. Cohen and Paul Mendes-Flohr (ed.), *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*, Simon & Schuster, 1988.

Koenker, Ernest B., *Secular Salvations: The Rites and Symbols of Political Religions*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965.

Kraybill, Donald B. and Peachey, Linda Gehman (ed.), *Where Was God on September 11? Seeds of Faith and Hope*, Waterloo: Herald Press: 2002.

Kreitzer, Larry J., 'Apocalyptic, Apocalypticism' in Martin, Ralph and Davids, Peter (ed.), *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997.

Kreyenbrock, Philip G., 'Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition' in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imagining the End, Visions of Apocalypses from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, London: Tauris, 2002.

Kümmel, Werner Georg, *Promise and Fulfillment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus*, London: SCM Press, 1957.

Kyle, Keith and Peters, Joel (ed.), *Whither Israel, The Domestic Challenges*, New York: Tauris, 1993.

Ladd, George Eldon, 'Historical Premillennialism' in Robert G. Clouse (ed.), *The Meaning of the Millennium, Four Views*, Downer Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1977.

Lahr, Angela M., *Millennial Dreams and Apocalyptic Nightmares: The Cold War Origins of Political Evangelicalism*, Oxford: OUP, 2007.

Laing, Ronald D., *The Politics of Experience and the Birth of Paradise*, London: Penguin, 1967.

- Lamy, Philip, *Millennium Rage, Survivalist, White Supremacist, and the Doomsday Prophecy*, New York: Plenum Press, 1996.
- Landes, Richard, 'Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled' in Verbeke, Werner (ed.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, Louvain: LUP, 1988.
- Langer, Susanne, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Cambridge: HUP, 1990.
- Lanternari, Vittorio, *The Religions of the Oppressed, A Study of Modern Messianic Cults*, London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1963.
- Lawrence, Bruce B., *Defenders of God, The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1990.
- Lawrence, D. H., *Apocalypse*, London: Heinemann, 1931.
- Le Bon, Gustave, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, London: Dodo Press, 2007.
- Le Goff, Jacques, *History and Memory*, New York: CUP, 1992.
- Leach, Edmund, *Rethinking Anthropology*, London: Athlone Press, 1971.
- Leed, Eric J., *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War 1*, Cambridge: CUP, 1980.
- Leibowitz, Yeshayahu, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, Harvard: HUP, 1992.
- Levi, Primo, *The Drowned and the Saved*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988.
- Lewis, Donald M., *The Origins of Christian Zionism: Lord Shaftesbury and Evangelical Support for a Jewish Homeland*, Cambridge: CUP, 2009.
- Liebman, Charles S. and Don-Yehiya, Eliezer, *Religion and Politics in Israel*, Bloomington: IUP, 1984.
- Lieven, Anatol, *America Right or Wrong, An Anatomy of American Nationalism*, London: Harper, 2003.
- Lifton, Robert Jay, 'The Image of the End of the World: A Psycho-historical View' in Leu Marx, Gerald Holton, Eugene Skolnikoff (ed.), *Visions of Apocalypse, End or Rebirth?*, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985.
- Lifton, Robert Jay, *Destroying the World to Save it, Aum Shinrikyo, Apocalyptic Violence, and the New Global Terrorism*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999.
- Lifton, Robert Jay, *Superpower Syndrome, America's Apocalyptic Confrontation with the World*, New York: Thunder's Mouth, 2003.
- Lifton, Robert Jay, *The Broken Connection*, New York: Simon Schuster, 1979.
- Lifton, Robert Jay, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, New York: Basic Books, 1986.
- Lincoln, Bruce, 'Apocalyptic Temporality and Politics in the Ancient World' in John J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Volume I, The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, London: Continuum, 1999.
- Lincoln, Bruce, 'Theses on Method', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, vol. 8, 1996.
- Lincoln, Bruce, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification*, Oxford: OUP, 1996.
- Lincoln, Bruce, *Holy Terror: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, Chicago: CUP, 2004.
- Lincoln, Bruce, *Religion, Empire and Torture, The Case of Achaemenian Persia with a Postscript on Abu Ghraib*, Chicago: CUP, 2007.
- Lind, Michael, *Made in Texas, George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics*, New York: New America Books, 2003.
- Lindsay, Michael, *Faith in the Halls of Power, How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite*, Oxford: OUP, 2007.
- Locke, John, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, New York: LAP, 1955.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O., 'Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall', in *Essays in History of Ideas*, New York: Braziller, 1955.
- Lowith, Karl, *Meaning in History, The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*, Chicago: CUP, 1949.
- Lustick, Ian, *Unsettled States, Disputed lands, Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank-Gaza*, Ithaca: CUP, 1993.
- Mamo, George W., 'Luckier than Moses, The Future of Jewish-Evangelical Alliance' in Alan Mittleman, Byron Johnson, and Nancy Isserman (ed.), *Uneasy Allies? Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, New York: Lexington Books, 2007.
- Mannheim, Karl, *Ideology and Utopia*, London: Routledge, 1960.

Marsden, George M., *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870–1925*, Oxford: OUP, 1980.

Masden, Douglas and Snow, Peter G., *The Charismatic Bond, Political Behaviour in Time of Crisis*, Cambridge: HUP, 1991.

McGinn, Bernard 'Revelation' in Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, *Literary Guide to the Bible*, Harvard: HUP, 1990.

McGinn, Bernard, 'Early Apocalypticism: The Ongoing Debate' in in C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich, (ed.), *The Apocalypse, In English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, Manchester: MUP, 1984.

McGinn, Bernard, *Anti-Christ, Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*, New York: Harper Collins, 1994.

McGinn, Bernard, *Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters by Lactantius, Adso of Montier-en-Derl, Joachim of Fiore, the Spiritual Franciscans and Savonarola*, New York: Paulist Press International, 1979.

McGinn, Bernard, *Apocalypticism in the Western Tradition*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994.

McGinn, Bernard, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought*, London: Macmillan, 1985.

McGinn, Bernard, *Visions of the End, Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, Columbia: CUP, 1998.

McGrath, Alister E., *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993.

Mearsheimer, John J. and Walt, Stephen M., *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, London: Penguin-Allen Lane, 2007.

Meissner, William, *Thy Kingdom Come, Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Messiah and Millennium*, Kansas City: Sheed-Ward, 1995.

Mendel, Arthur P., *Vision and Violence*, Ann Arbor: UMP, 2002.

Mergui, Raphael and Simonnot, Philippe, *Israel's Ayatollahs, Meir Kahane and the Far Right in Israel*, New York: Saqi, 1987.

Merkley, Paul C., *The Politics of Christian Zionism, 1891-1948*, London: Routledge, 1998.

Michael J. Mazarr, *Unmodern Men in the Modern World, Radical Islam, Terrorism, and the War on Modernity*, Cambridge: CUP, 2007.

Miller, Aaron David, *The Much Too Promised Land, America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace*, New York: Bantam Books, 2009.

Miller, Patrick D., *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, Harvard: HUP, 1973.

Mittleman, Alan L., 'Fundamentalism and Political Development: The Case of Agudat Yisrael' in Laurence J. Silberstein (ed.), *Jewish Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective*, New York: NYUP, 1993.

Moltmann, Jurgen, *The Coming of God, Christian Eschatology*, London: Fortress, 2004.

Moore, Barrington, *Moral Purity and Persecution in History*, Princeton: PUP, 2000.

Morrhead, James H., 'Searching for the Millennium in America', *Princeton Seminar Bulletin*, n. 8, 1987.

Morris, Leon, *Apocalyptic*, London: InterVarsity Press, 1972.

Mosse, George L., *Masses and Man, Nationalist and Fascist Perception of Reality*, Detroit: WSUP, 1987.

Mosse, George L., *The crisis of German ideology: Intellectual origins of the Third Reich*, New York: Howard Ferting, 1988.

Neiman, Susan, *Evil in Modern Thought, An Alternative History of Philosophy*, Princeton: PUP, 2002.

Neusner, Jacob, *Judaism*, London: Routledge, 2006.

Neusner, Jacob, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecy, Exile and Return in the History of Judaism*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1987.

Newman, David, 'From Hitnachalut to Hitnatkut, The Impact of Gush Emunim and the Settlement Movement on Israeli Politics and Society', *Israel Studies*, Volume 10, Number 3, 2005.

Newport, Kenneth, *Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Exegesis*, Cambridge: CUP, 2000.

Norhcott, Michael, *An Angel Directs the Storm, Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2004.

Novak, David, 'Judaism, Zionism, Messianism: Telling Them Apart', *First Things*, February 1991.

Novak, David, *The Election of Israel, The Idea of the Chosen People*, Cambridge: CUP, 1995.

Nurit, Stadler, 'Is profane work an obstacle to salvation? The case of Ultra Orthodox (Haredi) Jews in contemporary Israel', *Sociology of Religion*, 63.4, Winter 2002.

O'Leary, Stephen, 'Law Enforcement and New Religious Movements', *Nova Religio*, October 1999, Vol. 3, No. 1.

O'Leary, Stephen, *Apocalypse, A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, Oxford: OUP, 1994.

Ogden, Schubert M., 'Theology and Religious Studies: Their Difference and the Difference It Makes', *American Academy of Religion*, Volume XLVI, Issue 1, March 1978.

Ohana, David, 'J. L. Talmon, Gershom Scholem and the Price of Messianism', *History of European Ideas*, N. 34, 2008.

Ohana, David, *Political Theologies in the Holy Land, Israeli Messianism and its Critics*, London: Routledge, 2009.

Ojo, Matthews A., 'Born Again' in Brenda E. Brasher (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Fundamentalism*, London: Routledge, 1999.

Olson, Theodore, *Millennialism, Utopianism, and Progress*, Toronto: UTP, 1982.

Otto, Rudolf, *The Idea of the Holy, An Inquiry into the Irrational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, Oxford: OUP, 1950.

Paine, Robert, 'Topophilia, Zionism, and 'certainty'', Making a place out of the space that became Israel again' in Wendy James (ed.), *The Pursuit of Certainty, Religious and Cultural Formulations*, London: Routledge, 1995.

Partner, Peter, *God of Battles, Holy Wars of Christianity and Islam*, London: Harper and Collins, 1997.

Payne, Stanley, 'The Heuristic Value of the Concept of Political Religion and Its Application' in Roger Griffin (ed.), *The Sacred in the Twentieth-Century Politics*, London: Palgrave, 2008.

Payne, Stanley, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, London: LCUP, 1995.

Pedahzur, Ami and Perliger, Arie, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, New York: CUP, 2009.

Peleg, Samuel, *Zealotry and Vengeance, Quest of a Religious Identity Group*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002.

Peterson, Derek R. and Walhof, Darren (ed.), *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History*, London: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

Pettit, Peter A., 'Christian Zionism from a Perspective of Jewish-Christian Relations', *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, May 2007, Volume 7, Issue 5.

Peuch, Henri-Charles 'Gnosis and Time' in Joseph Campbell (ed.), *Man and Time, Papers from the Eranos Yearbook*, Princeton: PUP, 1971.

Phillips, Elizabeth, "'We've Read the End of the Book": An Engagement with Contemporary Christian Zionism Through the Eschatology of John Howard Yoder', *Studies in Christian Ethics*, n. 21, 2008.

Pizzorno, Alessandro, *The Roots of Absolute Politics and Other Essays*, Feltrinelli: Milan, 1994.

Porter, Stanley (ed.), *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

Pragai, Michael J., *Faith and Fulfillment, Christians and the Return to the Promised Land*, London: Vallentine, 1985.

Presner, Todd Samuel, *Muscular Judaism, The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration*, London: Routledge, 2007.

Psaki, F. Regina (ed.), *The Earthly Paradise, The Garden of Eden from Antiquity to Modernity*, New York: Binghamton University Press, 2002.

Rabinbach, Anson, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe, German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment*, Berkeley: UCP, 2000.

Rabkin, Yakov M., *A Threat from Within, A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, London: Zed Books, 2006.

Ram, Uri, *The Globalization of Israel, McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem*, London: Routledge, 2008.

Ravitzky, Aviezer 'Ultra-Orthodoxy and Anti-Zionism' in Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, William Scott Green (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*, Volume III, London: Continuum, 1999.

Ravitzky, Aviezer, 'Munkacs and Jerusalem: Ultra-Orthodox Opposition to Zionism and Agudaism' in S. Almog, Jehuda Reinharz, and Anita Shapira (ed.), *Zionism and Religion*, Brandeis: BUP, 1998.

- Ravitzky, Aviezer, 'Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality', *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, 39, 1986.
- Ravitzky, Aviezer, *Messianism, Zionism, and Religious Radicalism*, Chicago: CUP, 1996.
- Redles, David, *Hitler's Millennial Reich, Apocalyptic Belief and the Search of Salvation*, New York: NUP, 2005.
- Reeves, John C., *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic, A Post-rabbinic Jewish Apocalyptic Reader*, Atlanta: SBL, 2005.
- Reeves, Marjorie, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, London: SPCK, 1976.
- Reeves, Marjorie, *The Influence of Prophecy in Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.
- Reinhold, Niebuhr, *Faith and History, A Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History*, London: Nisbet, 1949.
- Reiser, Stewart, *The Politics of Leverage: The National Religious Party of Israel and Its Influence on Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: Harvard University, 1984.
- Rhoads, David (ed.), *From Every People and Nation, The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.
- Rhodes, James, *The Hitler Movement: A Modern Millenarian Revolution*, Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1980.
- Ricoeur, Paul, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.
- Rinehart, James F., *Apocalyptic Faith and Political Violence, Prophets of Terror*, London: Palgrave, 2006.
- Rinehart, James F., *Revolution and the Millennium, China, Mexico, and Iran*, London: Praeger, 1997.
- Robinson, Douglas, 'Literature and Apocalyptic' in Stephen J. Stern, *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and Contemporary Age*, Volume III, London: Continuum, 2000.
- Rose, Jacqueline, *The Question of Zion*, Princeton: PUP, 2005.
- Rossing, Barbara R., *The Rapture Exposed: the Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*, Boulder: Westview Press, 2004.
- Routsila, Markku, *The Origins of Christian Anti-Internationalism, Conservative Evangelical and the League of Nations*, Georgetown: GUP, 2008.
- Rowland, Christopher and Kovacs, Judith, *Revelation, The Blackwell Bible Commentaries*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.
- Rowland, Christopher, *Radical Christianity, A Reading of Recovery*, New York: Orbis, 1988.
- Rowland, Christopher, *The Open Heaven, A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*, New York: Crossroad, 1982.
- Rowley, Gwyn, 'The Land of Israel: A Reconstructionist Approach' in David Newman (ed.), *The Impact of Gush Emunim, Politics and Settlement in the West Banks*, London: Croom Helm, 1984.
- Rowley, Henry H., *The Relevance of Apocalyptic: A Study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation*, Greenwood: The Attic Press, 1941.
- Rubinstein, Amnon, *The Zionist Dream Revisited: From Herzl to Gush Emunim and Back*, New York: Schocken Books, 1988.
- Ruether, Rosemary, *Faith and Fratricide, The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, Minneapolis: Seabury, 1974.
- Russell, D. S., *Apocalyptic, Ancient and Modern*, London: SCM Press, 1978.
- Russell, Jeffrey B., *The Prince of Darkness, Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1988.
- Russell, Jeffrey B., *A History of Heaven, The Singing Silence*, Princeton: PUP, 1997.
- Ruthven, Malise, *Fundamentalism, The Search for Meaning*, Oxford: OUP, 2004.
- Samson, David and Fishman, Tzvi, *Torat Eretz Yisrael*, Jerusalem: TEY Publications, 1991.
- Sandeen, Ernest R., *The Root of Fundamentalism, British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930*, Chicago: CUP, 2008.
- Schmitt, Carl, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago: CUP, 1996.
- Schnall, David J., *Radical Dissent in Contemporary Israeli Politics, Cracks in the Wall*, New York: Praeger, 1979.
- Scholem, Gershom, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, New York: Schocken Books, 1995.
- Scholem, Gershom, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York: Schocken Books, 1996.

Scholem, Gershom, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead, Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*, Schocken Books, New York, 1991.

Scholem, Gershom, *Sabbatai Sevi, The Mystical Messiah*, Princeton: Bollinger, 1973.

Schwartz, Dov, *Faith at the Crossroads: A Theological Profile of Religious Zionism*, Boston: Brill, 2002.

Schwartz, Dov, *Religious Zionism, History and Ideology*, Boston: ASP, 2009.

Schwartz, Regina M., *Remembering and Repeating, On Milton's Theology and Poetics*, Chicago: CUP, 1988.

Schweid, Eliezer, *The Land of Israel: National Home Or Land of Destiny*, New York, AUP, 1985.

Scott, J. Julius, *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.

Segev, Tom, *1949: The First Israelis*, New York: The Free Press, 1986.

Seliger, Martin, *Ideology and Politics*, New York: Free Press, 1976.

Seligman, Adam, 'Christian Utopias and Christian Salvation: A General Introduction' and 'The Eucharist Sacrifice and the Changing Utopian Moment in Post Reformation Christianity', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, XXIX, 1-2, 1988.

Shahak, Israel, 'The Ideology of Jewish Messianism', *Race and Class, A Journal on Racism, Empire and Globalisation*, Volume 37, Number 2, 1995.

Shahak, Israel, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion, The Weight of Three Thousand Years*, London: Pluto Press, 2002.

Shaked, Shaul, 'Iranian Influence on Judaism: First Century B.C.E. to Second Century C.E' in Davies, W. D. and Finkelstein Louis (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol. I, The Persian Period*, Cambridge: CUP, 1984.

Shepperson, George, 'Comparative Study of Millenarian Movements' in Thrupp, Sylvia L. (ed.), *Millennial Dreams in Action, Studies in Revolutionary Movements*, New York: Schocken Books, 1966.

Shimon, Gideon, *The Zionist Ideology*, London: BUP, 1995.

Shindler, Colin, 'Likud and the Christian Dispensationalists: A Symbiotic Relationship', *Israel Studies*, Volume 5, Number 1, Spring 2000.

Shindler, Colin, *The Land Beyond Promise: Israel, Likud and the Zionist Dream*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2001.

Sizer, Stephen, *Christian Zionism, A Road-map to Armageddon*, London: IVP, 2004.

Sizer, Stephen, *Zion's Christian Soldiers? The Bible, Israel and the Church*, London: IVP, 2007.

Smith, Anthony D., *Chosen People, Sacred Sources of National Identity*, Oxford: OUP, 2003.

Smith, Gary Scott, *Faith and Presidency: From George Washington to George W. Bush*, New York: OUP, 2006.

Smith, Robert O., 'Jewish-Christian Difficulties in Challenging Christian Zionism', *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, Volume 7, May 2007.

Spector, Stephen, *Evangelical and Israel, The Story of American Christian Zionism*, Oxford: OUP, 2009.

Sprinzak, Ehud, 'Gush Emunim: The Tip of the Iceberg', *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, Number 21, Fall 1981.

Sprinzak, Ehud, 'Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism, Patterns of Predjudice', *The American Jewish Committee*, Volume 19, Numbers 3 and 4, 1985.

Sprinzak, Ehud, *Brother Against Brother, Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to Rabin Assassination*, New York: Free Press, 1999.

Sprinzak, Ehud, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, Oxford: OUP, 1991.

St Augustine, *Essential Sermons*, New York: New City Press, 2007.

St Augustine, *The Confessions*, Oxford: OUP, 1998.

Standaert, Michael, *Skipping Towards Armageddon, The Politics and Propaganda of the Left Behind Novels and the LaHaye Empire*, New York: Soft Skull, 2006.

Sternhell, Zeev, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology*, Princeton: PUP, 1994.

Stoyanov, Yuri, *The Other God: Dualist Religions from Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy*, Yale: YUP, 2000.

Strozier, Charles, 'Opening the Seven Seals of Fundamentalism' in Charles Strozier, David Terman, and James Jones (ed.), *The Fundamentalist Mindset, Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History*, Oxford: OUP, 2010.

Strozier, Charles, 'The Apocalyptic Other, On Fundamentalism and Violence', *Nova Religio*, Volume 11, Issue 1, 2007.

Strozier, Charles, 'The Apocalyptic Other' in Charles Strozier, David Terman, and James Jones (ed.), *The Fundamentalist Mindset, Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History*, Oxford: OUP, 2010.

Strozier, Charles, *Apocalypse: On Psychology of Fundamentalism in America*, Boston: Beacon, 1994.

Swenson, Donald, *Society, Spirituality and the Sacred: A Social Scientific Introduction*, Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1999.

Tal, Uriel, 'Contemporary Hermeneutics and Self-Views on the Relationship between State and Land' in Lawrence A. Hoffman (ed.), *The Land of Israel, Jewish Perspectives*, Notre Dame: NDU, 1986.

Tal, Uriel, 'Foundations of a Political Messianic Trend in Israel', *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, Number 35, Spring 1985.

Tal, Uriel, *Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Third Reich*, London: Routledge, 2004.

Talmon, Jacob L., *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy, Political Theory and Practice During the French Revolution and Beyond*, London: Penguin, 1986.

Talmond, Yonina, 'Millennial Movements', *Archives Europeennes de Sociologie*, 7, 1966.

Tan, Paul Lee, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, Rockville: BMH, 1974.

Telushkin, Rabbi Joseph, *Jewish Literacy, The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People and Its History*, New York: Morrow, 1991.

Terman, David, 'Fundamentalism and the Paranoid Gestalt' in Charles Strozier, David Terman, and James Jones (ed.), *The Fundamentalist Mindset*, Oxford: OUP, 2010.

Thompson, Damian, *Waiting for the Antichrist, Charisma and Apocalypse in a Pentecostal Church*, Oxford: OUP, 2005.

Thompson, Leonard L., *The Book of Revelation*, Oxford: OUP, 1990.

Tibi, Bassam, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism, Political Islam and the New World Disorder*, Berkeley: UCP, 1998.

Todorov, Tzvetan, *Hope and Memory*, London: Atlantic, 2003.

Tuveson, Ernest Lee, *Millennium and Utopia, Background of the Idea of Progress*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1949.

Tuveson, Ernest Lee, *Redeemer Nation, The idea of America's Millennial Role*, Chicago: CUP, 1968.

Van Der Leeuw, Gerardus 'Primordial Time and Final Time' in Joseph Campbell (ed.), *Man and Time*, Princeton: PUP, 1971.

Voegelin, Eric, *The New Science of Politics*, Chicago: CUP, 1952.

Volkan, Vamik D., *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies: From Clinical Practice to International Relationships*, New York: Jason, 1988.

Von Rad, Gerhard, *Holy War in Ancient Israel*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

Vondung, Klaus, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, Columbia: UMP, 2000.

Wagner, Donald, 'Christian Zionism in US Middle East Politics' in Aftab Ahmad Malik (ed.), *With God on Our Side, Politics and Theology of the War on Terrorism*, Bristol: Amal, 2005.

Wagner, Donald, *Anxious for Armageddon, A Call to Partnership for Middle Eastern and Western Christians*, Waterloo: Herald Press, 1995.

Walker, Peter (ed.), *The Land of Promise: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives*, London: InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Wallace, Anthony, 'Revitalization Movements' in Robert Grumet (ed.) Anthony Wallace, *Revitalization and Mazeways, Essays on Culture Change*, Volume 1, Lincoln: UNP, 2003.

Wallis, Jim, *God's Politics, Why the American Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*, San Francisco: Harper, 2005.

Wallis, John, 'Millenarianism and Violence in the Contemporary World' in Kenneth Newport and Crawford Gribben (ed.), *Expecting the End, Millennialism in Social and Historical Context*, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006.

Walzer, Michael, *Exodus and Revolution*, New York: Basic Books, 1985.

Wasserman, Elhanan Bunim, *The Epoch of the Messiah*, New York: Ohr Elchonon, 1976.

Weber, Max, *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.

Weber, Timothy, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, Grand Rapids: Academie, 1983.

- Weber, Timothy, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*, Grand Rapid: Baker, 2004.
- Weissbrod, Lilly, 'Core Values and Revolutionary Change' in David Newman (ed.), *The Impact of Gush Emunim, Politics and Settlement in the West Banks*, London: Croom Helm, 1984.
- Wessinger, Catherine, 'Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution and Violence' in Catherine Wessinger (ed.), *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence, Historical Cases*, Syracuse: SUP, 2000.
- Wessinger, Catherine, 'Millennialism With and Without Mayhem' in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (ed.), *Millennium, Messiah, and Mayhem, Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, London: Routledge, 1997.
- Wildavsky, Aaron, *The Nursing Father: Moses as a Political Leader*, Tuscaloosa, UAP, 1984.
- Williams, Rowan, *Writing in the Dust: Reflection on 11th September and its Aftermath*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2002.
- Wilson, Robert R., 'The Biblical Apocalyptic' in in Abbas Amanat and Magnus T. Bernhardsson (ed.), *Imagining the End, Visions of Apocalypses from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2002.
- Wistrich, Robert, *Hitler's Apocalypse, Jews and the Nazi Legacy*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985.
- Wittreich, Joseph (ed.), *The Apocalypse, In English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, Manchester: MUP, 1984.
- Worsley, Peter, *The Trumpet Shall Sound, A Study of Cargo Cult in Melanesia*, New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
- Wray, T. J. and Mobley, Gregory, *The Birth of Satan, Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots*, London: Palgrave, 2005.
- Zarembski, Laura S., 'Israel's Religious Right - Not a Monolith', *Middle East Quarterly*, June 2000.
- Zertal, Idith and Eldar, Akiva, *Lords of the Land: The War for Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-2007*, New York: Nation Books, 2007.
- Zerubavel, Yael, *Recovered Roots, Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Chicago: CUP, 1996.

Online publications (with date accessed in brackets)

'Archbishop of Canterbury Says Christian Zionism Not Part Of Christian Tradition', *VirtueOnLine*, February 24, 2010, available at: <http://www.eurasiareview.com/2010/02/31898-archbishop-canterbury-says.html> [26/02/2011].

'Cinderella at Annapolis', *The Economist*, November 22, 2007, available at: http://www.economist.com/node/10177066?story_id=10177066 [12/12/2007].

'McCain Admits Hagee Endorsement Was A Mistake', *ABC News*, April 19, 2008, available at: <http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalradar/2008/04/mccain-admits-h.html> [08/05/2008].

'McCain: Finally renounce Hagee's extremism', *JStreet*, April 20, 2008, available at: <http://www.jstreet.org/campaigns/mccain-finally-renounce-hagees-extremism> [08/05/2008].

'Potential 2012 Republican candidates', *BBC News*, May 23, 2011, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-11802187> [06/06/2011].

'Apocalypse Now', *Time*, June 23, 2002, available at: <http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101020701/story2.html> [01/08/2006].

'Christians United for Israel: New Christian Zionism Lobby Hopes to Rival AIPAC', *Democracynow*, August 15, 2006, available at: <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=06/08/15/1326256#transcript> [03/06/2007].

'Global Survey of Evangelical Protestant Leaders', *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, June 22, 2011, available at: <http://pewforum.org/Christian/Evangelical-Protestant-Churches/Global-Survey-of-Evangelical-Protestant-Leaders.aspx> [09/08/2011].

'How neo-conservatives conquered Washington – and launched a war', *New Statement*, April 7, 2003, available at: <http://dir.salon.com/opinion/feature/2003/04/09/neocons/index.html> [01/04/2010].

'Huckabee Hobnobs with Hilltop Youth at Moskowitz' Shepherd Hotel', *Opinion*, August 20, 2009, available at: <http://www.comeandsee.com/view.php?sid=1009> [01/03/2010].

'Huckabee to Attend Gala at Disputed East Jerusalem Hotel', *Haaretz*, August 18, 2009, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/mike-huckabee-to-attend-gala-at-disputed-east-jerusalem-hotel-1.281951> [09/05/2011].

'Is Zionism losing ground among Evangelicals?', *Stephen Sizer Blog*, July 12, 2011, available at: <http://stephensizer.blogspot.com/2011/07/is-zionism-losing-ground-among.html> [14/07/2011].

'Israeli settlement plan denounced', *BBC News*, November 18, 2009, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8364815.stm [23/01/2010].

'John Hagee's Christians United for Israel Conference Mixes End-Times Prophecies With Lobbying', *Jews on First*, July 24, 2008, available at: http://www.jewsonfirst.org/08a/cufi_dc08.html [07/08/2009].

'John Hagee's Christians United for Israel Conference Mixes End-Times Prophecies With Lobbying', *Jews on First*, July 24, 2008, available at: http://www.jewsonfirst.org/08a/cufi_dc08.html [25/08/2008].

'Moral Man and Immoral Society: Rediscovering Reinhold Niebuhr', *American Public Media*, July 8, 2005, available at: <http://being.publicradio.org/programs/niebuhr-rediscovered/schlesinger-centennial.shtml> [09/09/2010].

'Rabbi calls for annihilation of Arabs', *BBC News*, Middle East, 10 April 2001. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1270038.stm [23/05/2010].

'Rabbi says God will punish Sharon', *BBC News*, Middle East, 9 March 2005. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4333099.stm [26/07/2009].

'Religion and the 2004 Election: A Post-Election Analysis', *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, February 3, 2005, available at: http://pewforum.org/uploadedfiles-/Topics/Issues/Politics_and_Elections/postelection.pdf [13/04/2009].

Ackerman, Spencer, 'Huckabee in 2007: There's No Such Thing as a Palestinian', *The Washington Independent*, August 18, 2009, available at: <http://washingtonindependent.com/55530/huckabee-in-2007-theres-no-such-thing-as-a-palestinian> [09/09/2009].

Adler, Katya, 'The Rise of Israel's Military Rabbis', *BBC Newsnight*, Israel, September 7, 2009, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/8232340.stm> [09/10/2009].

Ben-Ami, Jeremy, 'CUFI's dead end', *New Jersey Jewish Standard*, February 18, 2010, available at: <http://www.jstandard.com/content/item/12130> [23/04/2010].

Berkowitz, Bill, 'Hagee Bashes Obama at Christian Zionist Summit', *Scoop News*, July 29, 2011, available at: <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/print.-html?path=HL1107/S00347/hagee-bashes-obama-at-christian-zionist-summit.htm> [18/09/2011].

Besser, James D., 'Netanyahu Capitol Hill Allies Prepared To 'Run Interference' On Obama', *The Jewish Week*, April 2, 2009, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com-/2009/04/02/netanyahu-capitol-hill-al_n_182240.html [19/05/2009].

Besser, James, 'Palin Ignites New Debate On GOP Support For Israel', *The Jewish Week*, November 25, 2009, available at: http://www.thejewishweek.com-/features/palin_ignites_new_debate_gop_support_israel [26/11/2009].

Burns, Alexander, 'John Hagee compares Rick Perry to Abraham Lincoln', *Politico*, August 6, 2011, available at: <http://www.politico.com/news/stories0811/60804.html> [09/08/2011].

Camp, Gregory, 'Falling off the "Straight-Talk Express"', *The Bismark Tribune*, March 13, 2008, available at: http://www.bismarcktribune.com/news/opinion-/mailbag/article_da07803d-52c5-5c23-bf25-1b58052aefe2.html [14/04/2009].

Camp, Gregory, 'Falling off the "Straight-Talk Express"', *The Bismark Tribune*, March 13, 2008, available at: http://www.bismarcktribune.com/news/opinion-/mailbag/article_da07803d-52c5-5c23-bf25-1b58052aefe2.html [23/05/2008].

Chernofsky, Erica, 'Set apart for God and Torah', *BBC News*, Middle East, 19 August 2008. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7553860.stm [23/08/2008].

Chittenden, Maurice, 'Rabbi claims Holocaust dead deserved it', *The Sunday Times*, December 17, 2006, available at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news-/uk/article756142.ece> [23/12/2006].

Cohen, Rabbi Ahron, 'Orthodox Jewish Attitude to the Holocaust', *Review of the Holocaust*, Teheran 11- 12 December 2006, available at: <http://www.nkusa.org/activities/Speeches/2006Iran-ACohen.cfm> [23/12/2007].

Dumper, Mick and Pullan, Wendy, 'Jerusalem: The Cost of Failure', *Chatham House*, Middle East and North Africa Programme, February 12, 2010, available at: <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/papers/view/-/id/835/> [12/02/2010].

Esposito, John 'Obama Reversing Christian Right's Damage to Islam', *The Washington Post*, June 6, 2009, available at: http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith-/panelists/john_esposito/2009/06/obama_reversing_christian_rights_damage_to_islam.html [05/09/2009].

Franks, Tim, 'Israel's other demographic challenge', *BBC News*, Jerusalem, 3 September 2007. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/6970195.stm [09/10/2007].

Gershon, Gorenberg, 'Unorthodox Alliance, Israeli and Jewish interests are better served by keeping a polite distance from the Christian Right', *The Washington Post*, October 11, 2002, available at: <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Judaism-/2002/10/Unorthodox-Alliance.aspx> [23/11/2004].

Goldberg, Jeffrey 'Michele Bachmann's Hazardous Love for Israel', *Bloomberg*, July 18, 2011, available at: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-07-18/michele-bachmann-s-hazardous-love-for-israel-jeffrey-goldberg.html> [23/08/2011].

Hakoton, Shmuel, 'Gov. Mike Huckabee: Create Palestinian State Outside of Israel', *The Jewish Russian Telegraph*, October 15, 2007, available at: <http://www.jrtelegraph.com/2007/10/gov-mike-huckab.html> [23/11/2007].

Hankiss, Elemer, 'Symbols of Destruction', *Social Science Research Council After Sep. 11*, available at: <http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/hankiss.htm> [08/08/2010].

Harel, Amos, 'IDF rabbinate publication during Gaza war: We will show no mercy on the cruel', *Haaretz*, January 26, 2009, available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/misc-/article-print-page/idf-rabbinate-publ...mercy-on-the-cruel.1.268849?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.225%2C2.226%2C> [09/02/2009].

Heard, Linda S., 'The two faces of McCain', *Gulf News*, March 18, 2008, available at: <http://gulfnews.com/opinions/columnists/the-two-faces-of-mccain-1.91892> [19/03/2008].

International Crisis Group, 'Israel's Religious Right and the Question of Settlements', *Crisis Group Middle East Report N°89*, 20 July 2009, available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/israel-palestine/089-israels-religious-right-and-the-question-of-settlements.aspx> [23/08/2009].

Kindy, Kimberly, 'McCain Rejects Pastor's Backing Over Remarks', *The Washington Post*, May 23, 2008, available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/22/AR2008052203141_pf.html [25/07/2008].

Lake, Eli, 'GPO Candidates Voice Wariness Over Annapolis', *The New York Sun*, November 21, 2007, available at: <http://www.nysun.com/national/gop-candidates-voice-wariness-over-annapolis/66791> [12/12/2010].

Lieven, Anatol, 'Israel and the American antithesis', *openDemocracy*, October 19, 2004, available at: http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-debate_97/article_2168.jsp [12/09/2006].

MacAskill, Ewen, 'US 'dismay' at Israel over Gilo plan', *The Guardian*, November 19, 2009, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/18/israel-gilo-houses-us-reaction> [12/12/2010].

MacDonald, Bred, 'Jerusalem: Your Thermometer for Measuring Crises', *TheTrumpet.com*, April 16, 2009, available at: <http://www.thetrumpet.com/print.php?q=6110.4509.0.0> [28/09/2009].

MacDonald, Kevin, 'Michele Bachmann Loves Israel', *Observer*, July 1, 2011, available at: <http://www.theoccidentalobserver.net/2011/07/michele-bachmann-loves-israel/> [23/07/2007].

Macintyre, Donald, 'Daniella Weiss: "The Arabs are a filter through which we find our way to Land"', *The Independent*, October 12, 2008, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/daniella-weiss-the-arabs-are-a-filter-through-which-we-find-our-way-to-land-958715.html?service=Print> [12/09/2009].

Marty, Martin E., 'Israel's Holy War', *Divinity School at the University of Chicago*, April 28, 2010, available at: [http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications-sightings/archive_2010/0426.shtml](http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications/sightings/archive_2010/0426.shtml) [29/04/2009].

McGirk, Tim, 'Israel's Netanyahu: Taking a Turn Toward Pragmatism?', *Time*, May 18, 2009, available at: <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1896731,00.html> [23/05/2009].

McGreal, Chris 'US questions its unwavering support for Israel', *The Guardian*, July 5, 2010, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/05/us-israel-support> [09/08/2010].

McLeod, Beth, 'Religious row holds up Israeli hospital', *BBC News*, 5 April 2010, Ashkelon. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8597608.stm [09/04/2010].

Olasky, Marvin, 'On the Road Again', *World Magazine*, May 9, 2009, available at: <http://www.worldmag.com/articles/15329> [08/05/2010].

Posner, Sarah, 'Theocrats Deny End Times Theology Is Cause of Their Push for War With Iran', *AlterNet*, July 23, 2007, available at: [http://www.alternet.org/story-57273/](http://www.alternet.org/story/57273/) [08/09/2008].

Posner, Sarah, 'Theocrats Deny End Times Theology Is Cause of Their Push for War With Iran', *AlterNet*, July 23, 2007, available at: [http://www.alternet.org/story-57273/](http://www.alternet.org/story/57273/) [27/02/2008].

Rodger Jones, 'On Rick Perry and prayer', *Dallas News*, June 7, 2011, available at: <http://dallasmorningviewsblog.dallasnews.com/archives/2011/06/of-rick-perry-a.html> [09/07/2011].

Schlesinger, Arthur Jr., 'Forgetting Reinhold Niebuhr', *New York Times*, September 18, 2005, available at: www.nytimes.com/2005/09/18/books/review/18schlesinger.html [18/09/2005].

Selling, Abe, 'Texas gov. compares Gaza to Mexico, Masada to the Alamo', *Jerusalem Post*, August 13, 2009, available at: <http://fr.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1249418604250&pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull> [23/08/2009].

Sherer, Michael, 'Obama Seeks to Win Muslim Hearts and Minds', *Time*, June 3, 2009, available at: <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1902334,00.html> [09/06/2009].

Sutherland, John, 'Fierce Reading', *The Guardian*, August 21, 2010, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/aug/21/frank-kermode-tribute-john-sutherland> [09/09/2010].

Tabachnick, Rachel, 'A Serial Obstructionist', *Zeek, A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture*, May 17, 2010. Available at: <http://zeek.forward.com/articles/116518/> [19/02/2011].

Tabachnick, Rachel, 'Why Christian Zionists Love Jews and Other Notes from the End-Times', *Zeek, A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture*, May 19, 2010, available at: <http://zeek.forward.com/articles/116891/> [09/06/2010].

Tabachnick, Rachel, The New Christian Zionism and the Jews, A Love and Hate Relationship, *The Public Eye Magazine*, October 19, 2009, available at: <http://www.publiceye.org/magazine/v24n4/jews-new-christian-zionism.html> [23/10/2009].

Wager, Donald, 'A Christian Zionist Primer (Part II): Defining Christian Zionism', *Cornerstone*, Issue 31, Winter 2003, available at: <http://www.sabeel.org/documents/CornerStone31.pdf> [09/10/2006].

Wagner, Donald, 'A Heavenly Match: Bush and the Christian Zionists', *The Daily Star*, October 12, 2003, available at: <http://middleeastwindow.com/?q=node/284> [23/09/2006].

Weitzel, Robert, 'The Children of Palestine and Israel are Cannon Fodder for the Rapture', *Middle East Online*, March 20, 2008, accessed at: <http://www.alternet.org/story/79997/> [13/06/2008].

Weitzman, Rabbi Gideon, 'From Zion to Jerusalem and Back Again, The Jerusalem Day', *Yeshiva.org.il*, available at: www.yeshiva.org.il/midrash/Shiur.asp?id=2245 [18/09/2008].

Wilson, Bruce, 'McCain Courts 'Apocalypse Pastor' Hagee', *AlertNet*, February 23, 2007, available at: <http://www.alternet.org/blogs/peek/48397> [03/01/2008].

Zogby, John, 'Obama Rides The Waves Of Change', *Forbes Magazine*, May 21, 2009, available at: http://www.forbes.com/2009/05/20/obama-middle-east-opinions-columnists-change_print.html [29/05/2009].